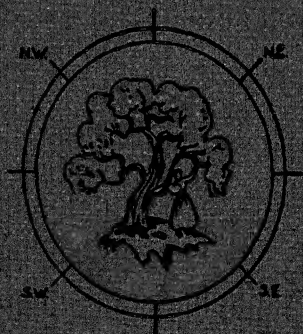


Mrs. Appleyard's Year



LOUISE ANDREWS KENT

kansas city

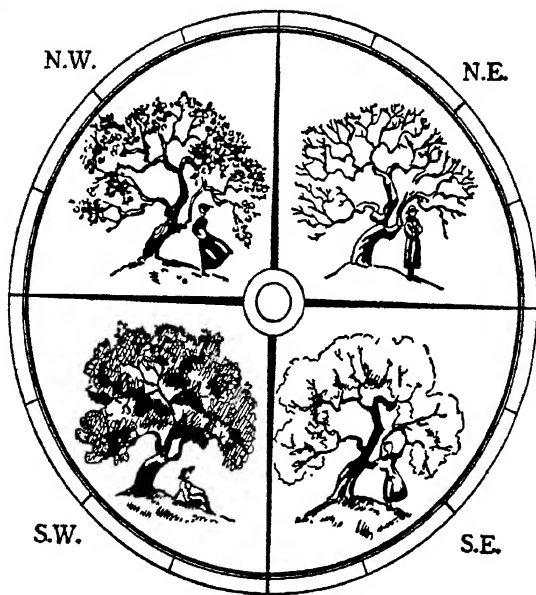


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Mrs. Appleyard's Year



LOUISE ANDREWS KENT

Boston

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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The author asserts that any resemblance between Mrs. Appleyard, members of her family, or other characters in this book, and any real person or persons, including the Scandinavian, is purely coincidental, and she can't think how it happened.

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TO E. T. A.

BECAUSE WHILE SHE AND THE AUTHOR DISAGREE ABOUT POLITICS AND THE WAY TO MAKE LEMONADE, THEY LIKE EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES, HOLD THE SAME STRONG VIEWS ON SHEL-LAC AND ASPARAGUS FERN, CHERISH CURLY MAPLE BUREAUS WITH CATS TO MATCH, AND LAUGH AT THE SAME JOKES—TWICE IF NECESSARY.

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Mrs. Appleyard's Year

ABOUT THE APPEYARDS

MRS. APPEYARD is about as tall as the Venus de Milo and weighs a little more. That is, of course, if the Venus were not made of whatever she is usually made of. In Mrs. Appleyard's youth it used to be plaster of Paris and the Venus lurked in dark corners of parlors on Overbrook Hill, looking strangely white against dark green cartridge paper. The Markhams' Venus — Mrs. Appleyard was Susan Markham — got broken when they moved in 1904. Mrs. Markham kept the head on the library mantelpiece with Mr. Markham's pipe, a Dresden potpourri jar containing tobacco, two brass candlesticks shaped like dragons, and a sepia photograph of Susan in her coming-out dress. The frame was embroidered with a blue bow and pink roses. There was also a vase with herons on it that supported — to a certain extent — three peacock's feathers. One of them had acute curvature of the spine.

From this inventory it may be gathered that Mrs. Appleyard is now old enough so that she still wears a hair net and that she is too young to wear a black velvet ribbon edged with steel beads around her neck.

'I may take to it,' she says gloomily over her orange juice, 'but it will have to be baby ribbon. My neck's not long enough for a dowager.'

In this Mrs. Appleyard does herself an injustice. Her neck is quite long enough to reach from her chin to her collar bone.

Mr. Appleyard pointed this out to her and asked her what more she wanted.

'A neck like a 'swan, blue-white hair with a natural wave, an Appleyard nose — like yours, darling' (Mr. Appleyard tried to conceal a pleased expression by running his forefinger over the handsome aquiline outline of his profile) — 'a voice like a muted 'cello — I read that in a book — and a flashing green eye.'

'Which one?' asked Mr. Appleyard. 'You'd look like a traffic light. I like you as you are,' he added staunchly.

The nicest thing about Mrs. Appleyard is Mr. Appleyard.

His loyalty is cheering, but still she thinks it is a bad arrangement that people's eyes keep getting smaller and their ears larger. Just keep it up, she said, and we'd all be elephants.

Mr. Appleyard considers them restful animals, and said so.

His wife replied that if you have to see yourself in a shop window, it would be better to be a swan or a tiger — well-groomed creatures.

‘Elephants,’ she said, ‘always need pressing.’

‘I never look at myself in shop windows,’ said Mr. Appleyard, not without a certain smugness — as his wife did not fail to point out.

It was all very well for him, she said. A man who can still wear the tail coat he bought in London in 1909, and with so much dash, can afford to disregard his image in shop windows. She, however, was always in danger of meeting that queer woman and finding out it was herself.

It’s grim, she says, to be reminded suddenly that your nose is crooked and your hair is straight instead of the other way. The hairdressers are beginning to say to Mrs. Appleyard: ‘But gray hair is distinguished, dear, it softens the face.’

There are two things that Mrs. Appleyard objects to in this speech. Why should people in shops call her ‘dear’ and sometimes add remarks that are perilously near baby talk? They are playing with dynamite when they do this to Mrs. Appleyard. She doesn’t want them to pat her on the shoulder either. The day will come when some priestess in the dress department for the mature figure will find she has pricked herself on a cactus

phonograph needle smeared with some subtle tropical poison. Besides, Mrs. Appleyard doesn't want her face softened. Indian pudding is soft, isn't it, but why choose it for a facial expression? Or plush either — also an unattractive substance, though soft. It makes Mrs. Appleyard's fingertips buzz just to think of it. It's almost as bad as squeaking your fingernail on the blackboard. Mrs. Appleyard has not had this gruelling experience for years, but she shudders just the same.

At this point in her reflections Mr. Appleyard got up, folded the newspaper and his napkin, put his chair neatly on the right spot on the rug, kissed Mrs. Appleyard on top of her head, chose the right one of his seven hats, put on his second-best Burberry and left the house, all with the quiet precision of a fireman going to a fire.

The house seemed very big after he had gone. The Appleyards live in a house that was too small for them when the children were small, and that is too big now that the children range in size from five feet four to six feet two. There are four of them. Standish is painting murals in a post office in Texas. Hugh teaches school in Arizona. Cicely is married to Tom Bradshaw, a young architect who would like to build those houses like boxes with inserts of cellophane, but generally has to design Colonial-Byzantine filling stations. Sally is away at college.

They are naturally very remarkable children. Even Mrs. Appleyard admits it, and she ought to know if anyone does. She has no favorite: she simply likes best the one whom she happens to be thinking about. Of course she thinks about them most when they are the most trouble, so she loves them for some slightly odd reasons.

Stan has always been admired anywhere he happens to be for his wit and charm and good looks. He has that Appleyard nose before mentioned, very blue eyes under heavy black brows, and hair that sunburns in summer so that it is dusty gold. These, however, are not the assets that appeal to his mother. She loves him because in school he drew caricatures of the masters on the blackboard, filled his roommate's washbasin with strawberry Jello just before going home for the week-end, and helped to disjoint a venerable automobile and reassemble it in the bedroom of his Latin master.

Hugh earned affection with the world outside by sweetness of temper and strength and willingness to turn his clever hands to almost anything. Mrs. Appleyard did not undervalue these qualities, but what she really enjoyed most were Hugh's ear-aches and the struggle he had with fractions. Mrs. Appleyard understood all about it. She has heard fractions called improper and vulgar and she considers that these are both understatements.

Mr. Appleyard is an economist. He teaches about graphs and weighted averages and statistics — but not to Mrs. Appleyard . . . Another thing about Hugh was that he was one of those adhesive children to whom dirt sticks at the slightest contact. It was Hugh who used to butter the dog's nose at supper, too. It was Hugh who made the Appleyards popular by building a cat hotel in the back yard.

Mrs. Appleyard naturally knew about the cat hotel because even an unobservant person can hardly miss a piano crate among the chrysanthemums, especially when the crate is divided into housekeeping apartments and decorated with the green velvet curtains that she had planned to give to a rummage sale for a Good Cause. What she did not know was that the whole neighborhood was laid under tribute to ensure the popularity of this Tourist Home, and that while some brought cream and some brought canned salmon, Hugh supplied the brand of French sardines of which not only the guests but also Mr. Appleyard were especially fond. . . .

Cicely helped in this project, too. It was she who provided the catnip mice for the establishment. She said that she liked to hear the cats howling in the moonlight. The Tremaines next door did not. Cicely considered this unreasonable, alleging that the cats did not make a bit more noise

than the Tremaines' baby. This was possibly true, but perhaps it would have been more tactful not to have told Mrs. Tremaine so. Cicely was a frank and honest and friendly child and the most companionable creature alive. She called herself to her mother's attention — and affection — by her habit of reading by whatever light was available: daylight, lamplight, candlelight, the light from a street lamp outside her window, or a flashlight under the bedclothes. She read in the bathtub too. Tom Bradshaw is still trying to break her of it.

Sally won public approval by playing hockey with the energy of several swarms of bees and by turning out verses at a minute's notice and by the effective use of a well-placed dimple. Her eyelashes have been favorably mentioned too. It is not for any such solid achievements that Mrs. Appleyard adores her youngest child, but because Sally has hives if she eats cucumbers and because she scatters her garments over northern New England and refuses to drive a car, on the ground that she would rather be driven.

'Terrible children!' thought Mrs. Appleyard. 'How did they ever grow up?'

Well, they have, and people often say to Mrs. Appleyard: 'It must be lonely for you with all the children gone.'

Just to be annoying she will never admit that it is. She says that she is glad she doesn't have to bring them up any longer: they bring her up now

instead. They drop in often enough from points south and west so that Cicely can censor her hats and Sally be firm about her shoes. Both are implacable about the relation between skirts and slips.

'Darling, I see you are wearing a slip,' is a remark that brings a blush to Mrs. Appleyard's cheek.

'It is pathetic,' says one of her friends, 'to see how dependent middle-aged people are upon the approval of the young.'

Mrs. Appleyard doesn't think so. She marvels at women who have the vim and energy to try to impose the ideas of the nineteenth century on people who have to live in the twentieth, but she has no ambition to imitate them.

She has given some thought to what kind of old lady she will be. Originally she planned to be a beautiful character and wear a lace cap, but somehow she doesn't seem to have the talent for it, and besides, there is something about a cap of rare old Honiton that would make its wearer look a thought too quaint if she happened to be dragging home a peck of spinach from the A. and P. Lavender and old lace is no costume for parking your car in a place that is not any too large for it, nor for shovelling out the garage after a blizzard either. She did toy with the idea that it would be fun to be the style of personality whose mood is a dark cloud full of thunder and lightning hanging just over the

chimney and know that everyone in the house is treading lightly as if on meringues and spun sugar until the cloud either explodes or clears away. They'd be hoping for a morning explosion so that they could count on a peaceful afternoon. Of course it would always be possible to fool them and have a second round after dinner. . . .

She would dress in expensive black and have a red wig and a diamond fence around her neck and carry an ebony stick. She would ride in a limousine with a square top and have a chauffeur who looked like a black beetle. She would collect something hideous — bronzes, perhaps, or old buttons — and threaten not to leave them to her relatives. She would cherish a cockatoo to whom she would cackle opinions of her friends and two long-furred monkeys. Calla lilies in alabaster urns would infest her drawing room and she would have cocoa shells for lunch.

Mrs. Appleyard can think of a lot of other things, such as asparagus fern and jet earrings, that would account for her irascible disposition, but she has regretfully given up the whole idea as being too much trouble. Also she had a little difficulty in fitting Mr. Appleyard into the picture. For one thing he prefers Madeira to cocoa shells. She has decided to forget, for the present, about being a character much as they are needed in Boston's Indian summer, and just go on for another year doing what she always does — whatever that is.

January

HAPPY NEW YEAR

FAULTS MRS. APPLEYARD certainly has. As she looks them over on the first day of the New Year they seem to her like the 'other articles too numerous to mention,' always mysteriously listed in auctioneers' advertisements. Since she has had most of her defects for over half a century, she is well acquainted with them. Some of them, indeed, have become enjoyable simply because she has had them so long. For instance: if she did not impulsively bring home a large Chinese cabinet (because it was such a bargain) instead of the lacquer finger bowls she started out to buy, her family would be deprived of the pleasure of observing: 'Now, isn't that exactly *like* Mother.' If she had not followed up this triumph of serendipity — which means, in case anyone wants to know, the art of finding something when you are looking for something else — by acquiring a Chinese ancestor

in a blue robe (well, somebody's ancestor anyway) to hang above the cabinet, Sally would have had no cause to remark: 'This cabinet was a bargain that I always knew was going to cost us money!'

Expressions like this give a great deal of innocent pleasure to their makers. So do the comments on Mr. Appleyard's fondness for looking up things in the dictionary during meals. Were the children allowed to bring their books to the table? Yet both parents set them a pernicious example. Mr. Appleyard is if anything a little the worse of the two. His pet digestive literature is the encyclopaedia with occasional digressions into *Who's Who*. As a comment on this habit, Hugh gave his father for Christmas the working drawings for the Appleyard Food and Book Trough.

The table looks like any other. There is even the centre piece (cemented down) displaying the usual Christmas bowl of fruit. The specifications call for three well-dried tangerines, one persimmon (soft), four apples (with wrinkle remover), one bunch of grapes (partly eaten), and two ossified pomegranates. This still life — or *nature morte*, as the French call it for some reason — stands on a circular piece of wood cut away from the rest of the table. The crack is veiled by a square of rare old brocade. Hugh says his mother can easily pick this up some day when she is buying some artichokes — or something.

Underneath the table is an ingenious mechanism by which Mr. Appleyard can step on a pedal and raise the centre piece eighteen inches, revealing a revolving bookcase containing the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Webster's Dictionary*, unabridged, the *Social Register*, the *Appleyard Genealogy*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, *Who's Who*, and *The Corpse in the Chartreuse Bathtub* — or whatever Mr. Appleyard is reading to take his mind off whatever else he is reading.

Without waiting for the Book Trough, the Appleyard children have already equipped the table with a disrespectful piece of apparatus. There is a ledge underneath, once a useful resting place for breadcrusts and raisins, carefully picked out of cookies by Sally. It has also been tried and found wanting as a repository for creamed codfish and spinach. What it now contains is simply a pencil and a small notebook.

It is the custom for the irreverent young Appleyards to listen politely to their parents' well-worn anecdotes and then pull out the notebook and remark: 'Ah! Number 83 B!' or, 'Let me see — when was this last told? What, not since 1939? It hardly seems possible.' Or on rare occasions: 'Quick, Hugh — the notebook! A new one! We must give it a number. Shall we put it under "Moral Tales" or "Incidents of Travel in Early Days"?'

When their neighbor, Mrs. Tremaine — who

believes in respect for parents whether they deserve it or not, because, as she very reasonably says, if they had to deserve it who would get any? — reproached Cicely for this flippant attitude, Cicely opened her soft hazel-green eyes, with that stare like an innocent kitten's, and said: 'But, Mrs. Tremaine, you don't understand. We're *proud* of Mother and Daddy. We don't believe there's another couple in the *world* that has three hundred and fifty-eight stories, all different. We think it's *remarkable!*'

It was Cicely, the minx, who invented the phrase 'to pink-sugar' anyone.

This interesting addition to the Appleyard family dictionary, which occupies two pages of the under-table notebook, arose in this way. Anecdote number 83 under 'Moral Tales' deals with the time Mrs. Appleyard, then a not very innocent child of three, mashed up a quantity of strawberry juice and powdered sugar, concealed the delectable mess in a large mussel shell in the stove of the doll's house kitchen — and then forgot about it. It was not very attractive when it was found six weeks later. That is all there is to the story, but in Mrs. Appleyard's hands it used to occupy some time in the telling and the point about the stupidity of hoarding was of course subtly indicated.

The Appleyards like to grasp strawberries by the hulls and mash them into sugar. It is Mrs.

Appleyard's contention that a strawberry not worth eating this way is not worth eating in any form. So in June, when the first Marshfield berries come into the Boston market, and later in Appleyard Centre, the episode of the pink sugar comes naturally to mind. One season, when the Appleyard Centre berries were like rather small filets mignons, Mrs. Appleyard told it three times. She was asked to tell it. It was not until the third time that she realized that her fiendishly innocent-looking offspring were trying to see how many times she *would* tell it. That is why, when she is asked to tell a story, she uses Cicely's phrase suspiciously: 'Are you pink-sugaring me?'

Even the sight of a strawberry now makes her feel as self-conscious as a hippopotamus on cellophane. She admits that repetitiousness is a fault and she tries to get over it, although after a study of the situation she has come to the conclusion that it is difficult to have all conversation brand-new and that one factor in any friendship is the ability to listen to it as if it were.

She intends to improve on both points this year. She also plans to glance occasionally at her engagement book instead of keeping the entries in it a secret from herself. She hopes she will keep her desk looking less like the town dump in a heavy fog. She means to do better about the relation between buttons and Mr. Appleyard's lingerie.

When people ask her how she is, she will try to bite her tongue before she tells them. If inquiries about her children are added, she will strive earnestly to conceal the fact that they are extraordinary. She thinks even the proudest mother ought to be able to tell about four children in four paragraphs. She admits that after twenty-seven years she might learn that Mr. Appleyard's blood pressure goes up when the roast beef is served on a small, cold platter instead of on a large, hot one. She doesn't blame him a bit.

She could, of course, go on counting over the rosary of her faults, but she has decided it is too depressing; so she has taken a little time to dwell upon her virtues, too. If she doesn't, who will? Compared to the achievements of Joan of Arc they may seem slight, but then Mrs. Appleyard is only a housewife. She knows she is because she read it in the Overbrook Town Report.

As such she has certain virtues.

She has never piped whipped cream around the edge of a grapefruit.

She does not call wineglasses 'stem-ware.'

She uses the brakes on her car instead of the horn.

When she remembers an engagement at all, she gets there on time.

She speaks little of her servant problem.

She balances her own checkbook, no matter how long it takes.

She likes the same people she liked when she was twelve years old. And some she never saw until last week. In fact she likes people. She likes hummingbirds, too.

She never makes a fourth at bridge to help anyone out. She found out long ago that she was no help.

She enjoys praise, but she knows that most praise implies surprise, so if she gets any she is grateful but calm.

She realizes that at about her age women generally begin to think about either their souls or their figures and that it is too late to do much about them. Therefore she never mentions reducing while she is eating cream of mushroom soup, sweetbreads sous cloche, candied sweet potatoes, and chocolate marron parfait. Thoughts on this subject she keeps for her interviews with the bathroom scales.

She chuckles over the remarks that her friends make about each other and forgets them.

Really, as she thinks it over, she feels almost unbearably virtuous. Perhaps her own best contribution to a pleasant New Year for everyone would be for her to indulge in her vices a little more. So that is her Resolution.

February

I. TOO SHORT SOMETIMES

II. LETTER FROM AUNT HILDEGARDE

I

HARSH THINGS have been said about February, but not by Mrs. Appleyard. She likes its uncertain temper, its ability to produce snowdrifts one minute and snowdrops the next; the way it can whip up clouds that would mean thunder and lightning in August, but that in the shortest month suddenly vanish, leaving pools of blue shadow on the snow and blue jays like floating sapphires screaming among the pines. She likes to see the sun dial topped with a white cap tall enough for a chef and to watch the snow being blown into the rough bark of the elm tree. The biggest storm she remembers was in February. It seems only a few years ago that the children had that igloo on the lawn. That was the year that Sally had her scarlet coat and cap with gray fur. When she bounced suddenly out of the igloo, visitors always

looked as if they expected to see a sleigh and eight tiny reindeer following her.

It was that year that Sally was heard chanting to herself: 'My snow house was so big. I crawled in and in and down came the snow on my head. But today the rain has come and I am watching my chimneys and my windows and my door melting to puddles.'

Puddles are of course a February problem. The snow that was white on Monday is brown sugar on Tuesday and muddy pools on Wednesday. After her car has once been well splashed and she has made the prudent decision to resist the charms of the ten-minute wash until April, Mrs. Appleyard gets a good deal of innocent pleasure from driving fast through shallow brown lakes and hearing fountains spurting under her wheels. She does not do this within range of any nylon stockings in the honey-beige or dawn-glow shades. She leaves that project to taxi-drivers.

Willows turning faintly golden against a dark blue sky with ragged clouds blown across it always delude her into the idea that this year spring will come early. When she realizes that she has been fooled again, she stays happily indoors. There is a strain of groundhog blood in her ancestry, Mr. Appleyard says. She sees her shadow and digs in again. She goes to bed early and makes up for it by getting up late. She reads

Pride and Prejudice, *Walden*, *Rob Roy* — long, leisurely books that she can go to sleep over and pick up another evening. After such reading she claims that she sleeps as if she were floating on black velvet spread over warm snowflakes that never melt and that her bed is suspended by ostrich feathers and blown in a warm breeze. Toward six in the morning she sometimes suffers from a few moments of insomnia. Years of getting out of bed at that grim gray hour and chivvyng the children into clean clothes, making indelicate insinuations about the backs of necks and the edges of fingernails, juggling with oatmeal and poached eggs, forcing rubbers on reluctant feet, cajoling the sulky motor from the faint pop to the full-throated roar — these cannot be entirely forgotten.

She wakes sharply with the nightmare feeling that she must warm the baby's bottle, sew on the lost button, find the costumes that will turn Stan into a knight and Sally into a rabbit, hunt down the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, braid the pigtail, distinguish between the throat that is sore from germs and the one that feels queer because today is the morning for what is disrespectfully known as Public Squeaking. Mrs. Appleyard is full of sympathy with this type of sore throat. In her youth on such days of wrath she used to suffer from a complaint known as cold-in-the-stomach-and-hot-in-the-legs. It is unfortunately hereditary in her

family. It generally passes off around ten o'clock and leaves the sufferer with an interest in skis and a splendid appetite for chocolate cake. Honor demands that he be kept in bed and given nothing but chicken broth and custard. So she must get up and begin her duties as policewoman, chauffeur, nose and throat specialist, and dietician.

Only, wonderful feeling, *she doesn't have to*. The children are grown up. She can turn over and go to sleep again.

February was always a month crowded with incident. Measles flourished then and chickenpox. It is possible to have both at once. It doesn't seem as if there would be room on one child for both, but Mrs. Appleyard asserts that there is and that you can tell which is which because chickenpox is lumpier. If you have four children, she says, you can always have one in bed all February. Luckily Valentine's Day is in the same month.

One of the great problems of illness among the younger set is that the mother has to spend so much time and money in the Five and Ten. Doctors have a trusting nature. Woolworth demands cash. One of the most economical solutions is the Valentine Box. This makes it possible for the young invalid to keep his bed well filled up with cupids, darts, and paper lace. One of the great forward steps in civilization was made when valentines were put into quantity production in the home. In Mrs. Apple-

yard's youth she had to buy her heart throbs ready-made. Now about February third mothers supply the victim of whatever disease is fashionable at the moment with a box that is a perfect mine of hearts and flowers.

The patient cuts and pastes happily for days. What if there are a few germs among the roses? Everyone in the family is in quarantine anyway. What if there is paste on the pillowcase? It washes off. Scraps of scarlet paper stuck to the sheets can be removed with a little patience and the silver paper-cutter. What if the valentines are easily identifiable because of finger-prints on the lace border? With hinges getting lost in the blankets and daisies vanishing under the rug, there is mystery enough simply in the fact that it was put together at all. Roses are still red, violets are blue — approximately — and there's enough love in a Valentine Box for a bevy of cupids.

Of course February is less exciting now.

'I haven't,' said Hugh, in an aggrieved tone, 'had a day of comfortable illness for years.'

Yet there are some things that are unchanged with passing time. In February Mrs. Appleyard's turn to entertain the Pinball and Scissors Club still comes around. Mr. Appleyard always says that the occasion makes him think of the seven lean years in Egypt and the seven years of plenty. Beforehand he never gets anything to eat but cold

lamb, served in an absent-minded fashion that makes him suspect the dessert will be canned pineapple. Afterward he lives on what he likes to describe as a celestial smörgåsbord.

Now one of the nicest things about Mr. Appleyard is that he will eat the same thing three days running and like it — if he likes it. Therefore, when the Pinball and Scissors Club departs, leaving behind it plenty of halibut timbales with lobster sauce, lots of spring salad with watercress in it, piles of toasted cheese sandwiches that are pretty good heated up again, and a whole mould of coffee and toasted almond parfait, Mr. Appleyard accepts all as calmly as he did the cold lamb.

He likes the extra polished look of the house — the bowls of spring flowers, the fires burning in all the fireplaces; likes to see the plates he gave Mrs. Appleyard on Christmas that she has been hoarding for this event. In fact he approves of everything but the sudden rash of guest towels in his bathroom.

On this subject he has strong views. The guest towel, he says, is a sort of fungous growth, claimed by some to be of modern origin, although others maintain that elaborate specimens showing no signs of wear were found in some of the better-class Egyptian tombs. Mr. Appleyard refers those interested in this controversy to *The Guest Towel: Its Economic and Political Significance*. This is a col-

lection of essays by various authorities including Dorothy Thompson, Shirley Temple, John L. Lewis, Clare Booth, Martin Dies, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Some readers may find this work a little confusing, because opinions differ. For instance, Dorothy Thompson considers the guest towel as fascist propaganda, whereas Martin Dies is inclined to regard the whole thing as communist plotting. Mrs. Roosevelt, who seems to have arrived pretty consistently before her hostess got the guest towels out, considers the dangers much exaggerated.

Mr. Appleyard is less interested in the deeper implications of the subject than he is in the ordinary everyday manifestations. On any given evening, he says, in 1,673,328 American homes (the figures are Mr. Appleyard's) wives are harrying husbands in and out of bathrooms tiled in the latest colors, slamming the family towels hastily into clothes-baskets — unless of course they are millionaires of old Pilgrim stock, in which case the towels are carefully folded to be replaced later — and hanging up rows of guest towels that harmonize with the color scheme. Later in the evening, after the guests have departed, the towels are restored to their place in the linen closet. Rather than sully such perfection, the guests have wiped their hands surreptitiously on the corner of a stray family bathtowel or on their own handkerchiefs, or on the bathmat.

One hostess reported to Mr. Applebyard that she has been hanging out a little confection of lavender and old lace at every party since her marriage fifteen years ago and that no one has ever used it. Mr. Applebyard promised to break the taboo, but when he saw its abrasive embroidery, its lumpy monogram, its ventilated border, he shied like a frightened zebra. A guest's skin is apparently considered more scratch-proof than the family hide, but Mr. Applebyard will never know how that particular masterpiece felt. He dried his hands by holding them over the radiator and by blowing on them. The pneumatic method of hand-drying leaves something to be desired, but anything seemed better than breaking the old American tradition.

'Yet it ought to be broken,' says Mr. Applebyard, rumpling his hair and looking fierce. 'A band of zealots,' he says, 'ought to arise. They must pledge themselves to crumple and rumple all guest towels, to use them for shoe polishers, to trample them into the linoleum. They must' — and here Mr. Applebyard's usually mild blue eyes flashed fire — 'wipe their safety razors on them. We must rip open the linen closets, snatch out those cross-stitched, eyelet-embroidered, Italian cut-worked emblems of slavery' — at this point Mr. Applebyard paused to eat a large olive stuffed with an anchovy and one of Mrs. Applebyard's special cheese biscuits of which

she alone knows the secret — ‘and dash them into the basin. Pour in tons of soapflakes, send motor boats and eight-oared shells to churn up the sodden mass, hang the towels out to dry on the Esplanade railings, set up an electric mangle on the Common, iron them by the truck load, and then go home and use the good old roller towel in the kitchen. Let freedom ring!’

‘Yes, darling,’ said Mrs. Appleyard, and went upstairs to put away the guest towels.

II

MRS. APLEYARD is sure the British are going to win the war. She has several reasons, but the most important are Mr. Churchill, her Aunt Hildegard, and the British telephone. Mrs. Appleyard always admired Mr. Churchill even in the days when Aunt Hildegard used to apologize for him by saying that after all he was half American. Mrs. Appleyard herself is at least half American. Perhaps that is why she has always felt a certain kinship with the prime minister. A good many of her ancestors came to this country in various small boats that tossed about the Atlantic before 1640. Her father, however, prudently waited and came on the Cunard. There are a good many nice

people in this country whose ancestors missed the Mayflower. Mrs. Appleyard heard a lady tell a rather recent arrival to these shores something about the hardships on that well-known transport for antique furniture.

'My goodness,' said the new citizen sympathetically, 'it must have been terrible. I'm a foreigner, too, but I came on the *Normandie*.'

Of course Mr. Appleyard's ancestors patronized the Mayflower. One of them fell overboard after taking a little refreshment, but luckily someone threw him a rope and he 'clept holde of ye ende of it.' So that is how Mr. Appleyard happened to be at Susan Markham's coming-out tea, looking so distinguished that the *débutante* immediately decided that he would be a good man to keep an eye on. So she did—in fact both eyes. . . .

It was Aunt Hildegarde who wrote to Mrs. Appleyard in 1914 to ask why the United States had not yet come into the war to help Britain.

'All the other colonies have,' she reminded her niece.

Aunt Hildegarde was very kind to Mrs. Appleyard. She said she would hardly know that Susan was an American. Mrs. Appleyard replied that she was sure her aunt meant it for a compliment. She felt she had retorted in a masterly fashion, but Aunt Hildegarde never even noticed it. She simply added that her brother had become dreadfully

Americanized. She had seen him begin to eat his marmalade before he finished his egg.

Mrs. Appleyard said what she could for her erring parent. She told how he always insisted on having the newspaper warmed every morning because when he was a young man papers in England used to arrive damp from the press. He was always firm about plates being hot and he threw maids into nervous spasms because he wanted the gravy spoon warmed. This had to be done just the minute before the spoon and the gravy met. He never for a moment forgot the British tradition of decentralized heating — to warm each separate article, but never the entire house.

‘He always taught the cook how to make bread sauce like a poultice and he always had his egg boiled two minutes and ate it out of the shell,’ Mrs. Appleyard stated proudly.

‘How else would one eat an egg?’ Aunt Hildegard said, and without pausing for a reply went right on to say that another thing she had noticed about Anthony was that he was always hopping up and opening doors. And pushing in the women’s chairs at the table.

‘One doesn’t do that here, you know. It looks as though you thought your hostess hadn’t a butler. Of course I suppose in a pioneer country things are different.’

‘Yes,’ Mrs. Appleyard said, she supposed they were.

Aunt Hildegarde then asked Mrs. Appleyard to tell little Millicent of any interesting experiences she had had in the Indian wigwams. She pronounced it to rhyme with 'slams.'

Now Mrs. Appleyard, unlike many Americans, had actually seen some Indians a bare two thousand miles from her own pioneer log cabin where she lives in primitive squalor without a butler but with an electric refrigerator, a Hepplewhite sideboard, Mr. Appleyard, and other Yankee inventions that she was beginning to get pretty homesick for. Aunt Hildegarde had a butler who looked like a slice of suet pudding, and she also cherished some imitation oak furniture that would have surprised the Tudors a good deal and an early Jacobean coal range rather like a pipe organ. She had cold shape for dessert, too, and custard made with egg powder.

Much has been written about the English passion for cabbage, but not enough has been said about broad beans. They are made out of old blotters and seasoned with hot water. Mrs. Appleyard had just choked down some especially broad ones. They made her so reckless that she began her little lecture on Indian customs by saying that wigwam rhymed approximately with 'shawm.'

'Yes, I know,' said Aunt Hildegarde, 'but I don't want Millicent to get the American accent.'

It was Aunt Hildegarde, too, who in this war

could write: 'I will just spend the time the bombers are overhead to write and tell you the family news.'

It must have been a long raid. There was time to tell about young men in planes and old men in firemen's hats and women who were air-raid wardens and girls who worked in shelters. There was time to tell about Millicent and her other grandchildren and Millicent's pony. No, though it had been kind of the Appleyards, Millicent was not coming to America. (So she would be safe from the accent anyway!)

'And now the all clear has sounded. Such good luck. I shall have just time to take the socks I have been knitting to the rectory and be back for tea....'

It was when she read Aunt Hildegarde's letter that Mrs. Appleyard began to feel sure that England was going to win, but it was when she thought about the British telephone that Mrs. Appleyard felt surest of British victory. A people who can stand daily contact with that instrument must be tough.

Mrs. Appleyard realizes now how naïve she was when she stepped right into the booth in Squibb's Hotel in July, 1939, and started to call up someone in the north of England whose number she did not know. At home, if she wanted to speak to someone in New York or in Burlington, Vermont, she would call Information and in about forty seconds a

polite and bored voice would say: 'The number is Aquamarine Tharee Fiuv Sevvin Ayut Niun. Do you care to make a note of it?'

Mrs. Appleyard, always suggestible, would make a note of it on the back of the invitation to be a patroness of a fashion show sent to her by someone with a sense of humor — no doubt. After discarding this quip the number would have to be acquired another day and Information would be just as weary and efficient as before.

In England you get a lot more action for your money. In the first place, in order to read the directions for operating the telephone, you have to stand on your head in the telephone booth, because the card of instructions has been thoughtfully placed about two feet from the floor. This would be easier for some types of customers than for Mrs. Appleyard. For instance, an India-rubber woman would probably be good at it, or a pygmy, or a very small bushwoman from Australia. If they could read, of course. Perhaps the telephone company doesn't really expect colonials to read. Probably, like Oxford and Cambridge, it believes in the tutorial system.

Mrs. Appleyard, unfortunately literate even while upside down, proceeded according to instructions. She dropped in her penny and asked for 'Trunks,' who, after an interval, replied and almost immediately discovered Mrs. Appleyard's

guilty secret: *she didn't know the number*. She was asked, in an icy voice that she felt sure must belong to a Duchess, to call Inquiry. Mrs. Appleyard did not at the time realize the subtle distinction involved in calling it Inquiry rather than Information, but during the next two hours she learned. Inquiry was haughty, too, and recommended her to call Trunks Inquiry, who expressed the usual quiet disdain for a moron who did not know the number and suggested that she talk with City Directory.

Up to this point she had spent only about twenty minutes in the booth. Mr. Appleyard had had a little telephone project himself, but being an impatient American he started to walk to the post office at Leicester Square. He was told by the hall porter that it was just a nice walk. The porter's idea of a nice walk turned out to be three miles. The porter was also a mine of useful advice about pushing Button A and Button B, two protuberances put on British telephones for the purpose of testing the morale of the intruder into the booth. With the porter's help Mrs. Appleyard finally got introduced to City Directory, who turned out not to be another Duchess or even an Earl, but an extremely friendly young gentleman with a slight Cockney accent. Like the others he was shocked by the discovery that Mrs. Appleyard didn't know the number. She began to wish that she had had it tattooed on her somewhere.

City Directory was frightfully sorry, he said that they were so busy this evening and he recommended Mrs. Appleyard to hang up for a while. She did, reflecting bitterly that there were probably Americans in town. She also suspected that Mr. Appleyard might be at the post office already and using all the resources of the service.

Within ten minutes City Directory called her and said: 'What is the nature of your inquiry?'

Mrs. Appleyard revealed her disgrace for the fourth time and was again allowed to tell the name of her friend's husband and where they lived.

City Directory: And you don't know the number?

Mrs. Appleyard: No. That's why I'm calling you.

C.D.: Oh! Well, I may have heard of him. The name once more, please. Well, I'll have a try at finding it. Just hold on. You're sure they're on the telephone?

Mrs. A.: Yes.

C.D.: Why?

Mrs. A.: I saw it on their writing paper.

C.D.: Haven't you got the letter?

Mrs. A.: No. I threw it away.

C.D.: I say! That's bad. Well, I'll have a look.

Then followed an interval during which City Directory licked his thumb, turned pages, lit a cigarette, whistled, and told his friend that Fancy Free came in last. This pause seemed to refresh him and he asked Mrs. Appleyard for the third

time how to spell the name of the place. It took only ten minutes to clear up Mrs. Appleyard's pronunciation. At the end of this time City Directory reproached her for misleading him.

Mrs. A. (meekly): I'm sorry. I don't speak the language. I'm just an American.

C.D. (kindly): Oh! (This is pronounced Aow and takes three seconds to say.) H'm, now we're getting on. I say — this chap's a professor!

Mrs. A.: Yes, he is.

C.D.: Good-looking chap, I suppose.

Mrs. A. (who is at last getting into the spirit of the thing): Very. And he has a red beard.

C.D.: Not really! Must look funny in a gas mask — what? Wonder if he wears it back or front.

Mrs. A.: I'll ask him — just as soon as you get the number.

C.D.: You're sure they're still on the telephone?

Mrs. A.: I *think* so, but of course they *might* have tried to use it sometime, so perhaps they've had it taken out.

C.D. (reproachfully): Now! Now! (pronounced Nah! Nah!) Yes, here it is. (*He reveals the number.*) Shall I ring them for you?

Mrs. A. (enthusiastically): That would be *marvellous*. Thank you so *much*.

It was too marvellous to be true. City Directory tells her to hang up and states that he will call her *immeejitly*.

Ten minutes slid by during which Mrs. Appleyard crawled into the booth and read the directions again.

'Who was it taught you to curl inside a buttercup, Mrs. Appleyard?' she inquired of herself, for she was alone, the hall porter having taken two Pekinese to walk. 'Was it Iolanthe? No, it was the London Telephone Company. . . .'

About this time a lady from Scotland who wished to engage a single room for a week from Monday appeared on the line. She wanted a private bath. So had Mrs. Appleyard once. The privacy of the one awarded to her consisted in its having been made out of a conservatory. It had glass doors that opened into her bedroom and windows that supplied enough light and air for a whole covey of calceolarias. Mrs. Appleyard wished a few aspidistras had been left for lurking behind. However, by running the bath long enough and hot enough the windows became somewhat steamy and she could feel less like a Rhine maiden in full view of the Metropolitan Opera House and more as if she were merely a chicken served sous cloche. She did not confide this to the Scottish lady.

'Let her find out for herself,' Mrs. Appleyard thought — with a certain amount of malice.

After this interruption, about half an hour after, Trunks called her again. She picked the correct

number of coins from the little hoard that she had been dropping on the floor for two hours. She did not confuse a florin with half a crown. She triumphantly pushed Button A at the right moment and actually, miraculously, found herself talking to her friend the Professor. He was very polite about being waked up. He did not seem to be wearing his gas mask.

Mr. Appleyard now returned from his three-mile stroll to the post office. He, too, had telephoned and he was inclined to be a little conceited about it. With true masculine clannishness he seemed to think that Mrs. Appleyard's difficulties were partly because her approach to the subject was frivolous.

'If I am frivolous, so is the Albert Memorial,' said his wife firmly.

They decided that hereafter, instead of trying to telephone to a place, they would go there. As Mrs. Appleyard pointed out, a comfortable train with compartments much larger than a telephone booth would have taken her to her friends' house in three hours and it had taken her two hours to telephone. Besides, on trains they had wonderful cheese and biscuits and strawberries in a punnet with strawberry leaves on top of them. Mr. Appleyard offered to take her out and buy her all these things, but she was too exhausted by her wrestle with modern inventions. Instead she went into her

conservatory and began steaming it up for a clandestine bath.

It is no wonder, she considers, that one of the first war measures was to forbid private use of the telephone. With the time saved simply by not chatting with City Directory, Hitler can be pushed into the British Channel. She is sure a people strengthened by contact with Buttons A and B will have no trouble doing it.

But perhaps the deciding factor will be Aunt Hildegarde — her courage, her obstinate refusal to let Hitler change her way of life, her conviction that it is the best way and worth any sacrifice that it costs. Mrs. Appleyard is rather proud of being related to Aunt Hildegarde: not because she is unusual, but because there are so many women like her. Mrs. Appleyard would not care much about a world where Aunt Hildegarde could not say what she liked. She wants her aunt to keep on writing letters — those letters on thin paper that hold the empire together.

Magna Carta belongs to us as well as to England, but conceptions of justice and liberty are not our only common heritage. There are smaller things just as important. Mrs. Appleyard likes to remember her father singing 'Do you ken John Peel?' and sitting down at the piano to play snatches of 'The Gondoliers' before he ate his breakfast. She likes best of all to think of him on her wedding day.

Because a gentleman always keeps his sword arm free, her father gave her his left arm as they started up the aisle. Mr. Markham had no occasion to draw his sword (and no sword), but this was a vital tradition, as his daughter knew. Neither of them remembered that in order to get into his pew after he had given her away, he would have to cross a billow of white satin and point d'Angleterre. He managed the leap with a spryness long remembered on Overbrook Hill, saying as he passed her: 'Lucky I was bred in the deep ditch country, darling.'

Through him she always seemed to touch another world. He could remember a visit to Germany at the time of the Revolution of 1848 and how crop-headed German boys would come up to him with their fists clenched, saying: 'Engländer, Box, Box,' and punching his curly head with their fat fists; for even then Germany was the home of culture and urbanity. . . .

And he remembered Trollope.

It was only a day or two before he died that he entertained Mrs. Appleyard with that story. He always treated her as if she were a delightful stranger whose acquaintance he was especially glad to cultivate. Really he had known her for fifty of his ninety years, yet he had never told her the story before. It was as if he had been saving it for her; producing it only now because he wanted

her to have some last thing of his to keep and remember.

'What have you been reading lately?' he asked.
'Barchester Towers.'

'Trollope! My darling, I, moi qui vous parle, have seen that great man...'

There was an inn, it seems, opposite the Markhams' house in Epping and the coaches changed horses there. On rainy days you pressed your nose against the glass and watched for the London coach. A long way off you heard the thunder of wheels and hooves. Then the horses steaming and smoking and the hostlers shouting and the coachman stumping off stiff-legged in his caped great-coat and the new horses being put to the coach and then the crack of the whip and the rumble and roar and the inn standing quiet again in the rain...

One Friday his father said: 'Watch today and you may see Mr. Trollope, the writer, go by. He drives down into the next county every week for the hunting of the fox.'

'And then he sang me a verse or two of the song,' Mr. Markham said and began to sing it himself half under his breath.

'... at Danny Johnson's Inn

And every man his whiskey took and shivered in his skin.
At five o'clock old Danny's horn resounded loud and clear
And every man to saddle got with four and twenty cheer.
Tally ho, hark away...'

For a moment it seemed to Mrs. Appleyard that she could hear the horn faintly blowing across green fields in the rain.

‘I thought,’ Mr. Markham said, ‘that a writer would be a lean pale man with black whiskers, but when my father said, “There he is. That’s Trollope,” I saw a big burly red-faced man, like a great farmer. He filled more than half the dog-cart — big arms folded, face rosy under a hat with a wide brim, tall hat, of course, covert-cloth coat, bird’s-eye vogel stock —— Know what that is?’

‘Blue necktie with white dots — I’ve read Jor-rocks,’ murmured Mrs. Appleyard.

‘Right. Good girl. Well brought up. The groom was driving — wiry little man in a green livery — the horse, sturdy black cob, white star on the forehead, went by at a sound trot, ten miles an hour, hammer, hammer, hammer, on the hard high road. That’s hard to say if you were born within the sound of Bow Bells . . .

‘So I’d watch for him every week in the season coming down for the hunting of the fox. That great man. They’d come over into our county sometimes. Our garden ran down to fields hedged in with dog roses and hawthorns. It would be barbed wire here. Filthy stuff. A horse can tear himself to ribbons on it. There was a mulberry tree at the end of the pleached walk — they say Charles the Second planted it . . . I used to stand

under it and watch for the hunt, but it did not often come our way and I never saw him close until the meet at the Cat and Bells.

'I was sixteen and I had my first hunter and the newest and shiniest top boots you ever saw and a black velvet cap, stiffened, you know, in case you fell on your head...'

He told about the meet and Mrs. Appleyard saw it all: the pink coats, the shining horses, bay and black and chestnut. The women riding side-saddle in their flowing skirts and gleaming silk hats and veils and beautiful gloves. Their hair was in nets and there were some who wore pork-pie hats with feathers that blew back with the wind. She could see the hounds with their waving sterns and soft eyes and silken ears. There was sunlight that gleamed on the huntsman's horn and on silver buttons and polished leather...

'My father took me up to Mr. Trollope and he nodded to me. My boots and my cap began to seem too new because everything he had on was so mellow with wind and rain and sun. It was like the difference between a piece of mahogany that's varnished and one that's been rubbed with beeswax and turpentine for a hundred years.

'They started a fox right away and somehow I was in front at first, not too close to the hounds, but well up and my new horse — a chestnut he was, both forefeet white — going sweetly. Then

there was a fence. There was a gate in it and those with sense were going through it, but that was too slow for me. I must jump the fence, of course. There were dog roses feathering up over it with the red hips shining and the whole thing seemed to come up like a wave as I went over.'

He was silent a moment, and then said with a twinkle: 'And when we were over, my horse stopped and I — went on.'

'Were you hurt?'

'No, I was thrown clear, but with my wind knocked out and, as I lay there, gasping like a salmon on a bank, over comes another rider and the horse skims me where I'm lying and I feel his hoof touch my new cap. He doesn't see me till he's over the hedge, of course, for a horse will never step on you if he can help it, and he's made a great twisting leap to clear me. Well, I picked myself up and pulled off my cap and there was the print of the hoof mark on it as clean as if it had been done in a press. My horse was two fields away by that time — never trust a chestnut horse or a red-headed woman — and I stood there in my shining boots looking pretty dismally at my new cap, when Mr. Trollope jumped the hedge on his big bay and came down beside me, landing, heavy horse, heavy man, as lightly as a leaf falling.

'He bent his big rosy face over to see if I was all right, then sat back in the saddle.

“Why don’t you put your head in your boots?” he called out, just lifted his reins a quarter of an inch, touched his spur to his horse’s side as gently as a man would touch a baby’s cheek, laid the loop of his crop as lightly against the horse’s neck, and was off across the green field, going hell for leather.

‘He had a big hearty roaring voice. That was all he ever said to me. I’ve often laughed since to think how I must have looked in my new clothes with the mud on them and my horse gone and staring at the hoof mark on my new cap. The stiffening saved my brain, I suppose, what little there was of it. Without it I’d probably not have had the happiness of knowing your mother — how beautiful she was — or you, my darling, and the children, and your husband. He’s a good American — Sam — and I can’t, after all these years in this great country, say more than that... Only spring comes late here,’ he said. ‘There would be snowdrops in England now.’

March

I. MUDDTIME

II. FLORAL FRENZY

I

THE THOUGHT that Mrs. Appleyard is planning to have worked in worsted as a text for March is: 'When mudtime comes, can spring be far behind?' She thinks it will be a nice addition to Cicely's collection of funeral emblems. A taste for gloom — or perhaps the fact that most people at auctions are more interested in sandwich glass and pine blanket chests — has led Cicely to assemble the largest assortment of wreaths north of the Winooski. There are wreaths of white feathers, wreaths of chenille, wreaths of corn and wheat, even wreaths of scraps of leather. Willows weeping over tombstones in charcoal or in embroidery subdue the spirits of those who occupy Cicely's guest room. Cross-stitched petunias cast additional woe around dreary sentiments. Walnut frames suppress any chance ray of cheerfulness. Wax flowers under glass add to the depressing effect.

Mrs. Appleyard thinks that March was the season when all these art works were created. No matter how often she encounters this month, she thinks she'll never live through it. Sometimes she doesn't care whether she does. Just what it is about March she doesn't quite know. It blows grit in your eyes, but other months are windy. Its predominating colors are gray and brown, but so are November's, and she rather likes to see the shapes of trees and of hills without color or even whiteness to distract the eye. March is no colder than January, yet it sets more joints aching. It is only three days longer than February, but it seems endless.

Boys and girls in boarding school begin to hate their roommates in March. March is the month when clubs are organized with the noble purpose of leaving someone out. It was in March that Mrs. Appleyard, a good — that is, timid — child if there ever was one, ran away from school for a whole day of sin and striped candy. March turned this lamb into a lion the next day and inspired her to tell the teacher that her mother had sprained her wrist and could not write an excuse for her absence. She had to stay at home and help, she said. March made the teacher too languid to investigate this story and it made the teller of it walk the streets looking uneasily over her shoulder because every footstep might be the truant officer's. He had black whiskers. Mrs. Appleyard still feels

guilty whenever she sees a man with them. Luckily this is seldom.

In March the light gets strong enough so that women see in the mirror how they really look and hasten to have their faces massaged. There is still light enough when they get home to show them that they look like boiled radishes. It is March that gets large ladies into large floral prints. It sends treacherous gleams of sunshine that lure them into flowered hats and then sends rain. It traps them into buying spring coats, though well they know that in New England you can't wear a spring coat until June and then it is too hot.

It brings pussywillows and suggests to malicious florists that it would be a pretty idea to dye them red, blue, and yellow. Mrs. Appleyard is planning a special place of torment for these gentlemen right alongside the niche for the sadist who put women into open-toed shoes.

Into the middle of this doomed period comes the crisis that is known as Spring Vacation. Then the front hall fills with hockey sticks and knitted caps and jerseys with strange new holes. In come pictures, hotly colored, of jungles full of giraffes and of knights with banners. The pictures have children's names on them and so do the jerseys, but not necessarily the same names. (Someone is going to make a fortune some day by organizing a clearing house to deal with this situation, but it will not be Mrs. Appleyard.)

It is in March that mothers empty pockets and disentangle the art gum from the caramels. What kills flashlight batteries? How do paper clips come? These are dark mysteries over which mothers brood in March.

The whole house, Mrs. Applebyard remembers, changes in spring vacation. No cake in the pantry. Frosting on the doorknobs. Crumbs on the rugs. The last snowball or the first baseball of the season knocks at — and then enters — the dining-room window. The lawn looks like a buffalo wallow. The edges of the front steps are decorated with mud scraped off boots. The portion not scraped off is distributed from cellar to attic with fine democratic impartiality.

After about two days of this, the mother of the family begins to think yearningly of the plains of Timbuktu. The dust bowl in July, the Sahara, in fact any wide open space that is dry, all come in for favorable consideration. Not that she is not enjoying the holiday — as it is sometimes called. She really likes to see three helpings of mashed potato, thick slices of steak, and mountains of toasted angel cake with chocolate sauce systematically stoked into young furnaces. There was chocolate angel cake once: an innovation, a departure from tradition. Mrs. Applebyard had read a rule in the paper. Even she is not proof against all human frailty.

It was Sally who summed it up politely.

'Thank you,' she said. 'I don't think I care for any more of the dark meat of the angel.'

Mrs. Appleyard never minded reproofs so gently administered. She rather enjoyed the slamming of doors. The fact that all the children in the neighborhood seemed to be dancing the Highland Fling on the piazza roof did not dismay her. She even became accustomed to the battles that burst forth suddenly and as suddenly died. There was only one thing she really couldn't stand — MUD.

It is the dread of mud, Mrs. Appleyard thinks, far more than the cherry blossoms that drives families to Washington, that sends others in search of snow-clad mountains, that makes still others brave seasickness.

There is no mud in her house now. She wishes there were.

II

AT LEAST in March there is the Flower Show.

Mrs. Appleyard wonders what has happened to the language of flowers. A book of the crinoline days informs her that in that happy era a lady who received a bouquet in its stiff paper frill did not criticize its artistic arrangement, nor estimate its

probable cost with one lightning glance. She sped to her Book of Beauty — or to the back of her patent-medicine almanac — and there spelled out the meaning of the tightly packed vegetation. Chaste — and non-committal — sentiments such as 'The Heart's Remembrance,' 'Forget me not, Fair Maiden!' or, more daringly, 'Forever Thine,' were thus conveyed.

Mrs. Appleyard has tried applying the rules to modern flower arrangements, but as she keeps encountering sprays of rhubarb, burdocks, and dried hardhack, she has decided to take up something easier. She is now studying Greek and when last heard from was getting on nicely. She hopes that it will help her with the floral jargon that has taken the place of the language of flowers. She hears hard words like *echeveria* and *helianthus* tripping lightly from the tongues of the horticultural elite. Even the simple forget-me-not enters society as *myosotis*. Roses may smell as sweet, but they are obliged to do so under aliases. Gardeners are often suspected of coming down with influenza when they are really only murmuring names like *gypsophilla*, *schizanthus*, and *eschschooltzia*.

The flower shows themselves grow more and more complex. Gone are the days when twelve pink roses in a green vase would receive a blue ribbon. The prizes at a modern flower show — and they are not mere snips of ribbon, but Lowestoft

bowls and Carolingian porringers — are awarded, Mrs. Appleyard thinks, as much for the background as for the flowers.

She likes to lurk about while the show is being set up and see some talented exhibitor overseeing the activities of a patient chauffeur and of a sulky husband. How they perspire over the carved chests, trestle tables, refractory pieces of tapestry, and enough silver to have kept Paul Revere off his horse for a month! When everything is satisfactorily arranged and while the husband is limping about with his hand on his sacro-iliac and uttering old colonial curses, the moving spirit arranges six tulips, three daffodils, three Spanish irises, and five stalks of larkspur (excuse it, please! delphinium) in a very possibly Stiegel flip glass and calls it a day.

Another does her alcove with rustic simplicity. She brings a gate-legged table, all the family pewter — for which she has ransacked antique shops from St. Johnsbury, Vermont, to Hackensack, New Jersey — an early Calvin Coolidge perforated glass flower holder, and quite a large bunch of calendulas, bachelor's buttons, and marigolds. She has brought some quaint old copper lustre too, and no one who cannot turn it upside down needs to know anything about its having been made in Japan. She certainly doesn't.

All around the hall are candlesticks, priests'

robes, red and white checked tablecloths, Georgian mantelpieces with suitable fire-irons and mirrors. There are flowers too. They seem a little like the bridegroom at the wedding — essential but inconspicuous in the jungle of decorations.

Just what are the rules as to what makes up a flower arrangement, Mrs. Appleyard is not quite sure. She has not yet seen a buffalo robe, an egg-beater, or a slide trombone combined with flowers, but give the ladies time. At present there seems to be only one requirement: the object in which stalks of this and that are displayed, whether it is a pallid pickle jar fully twenty years old, a Wedgwood soup tureen, or a rare Britannia metal teapot, or an even rarer old Bennington mincemeat crock, must be called a container — or by certain brave spirits a 'vahze.' Secure in this pronunciation, the artist in flower arrangement snaps up her unconsidered trifles, hires a truck, and proceeds to demonstrate the difference between orchids and ottomans, sofas and salpiglossis, calceolarias and calico.

It must be difficult at this season of the year, Mr. Appleyard says, for a woman to keep track of her possessions. The house is oddly quiet because the dogs are doing their barking at the Dog Show. The interior decorations show strange gaps because the triple-plated pie-knife, the bronze of 'Hippopotami at play,' and the Coromandel

screen have gone to the Flower Show. Her daughter is out tap-dancing for Philanthropy. Modern art has claimed that colorful painting 'Milk Bottles on a Fire Escape.' That young lady with the knobby knees, the platinum curls, and the strange husky voice who kicked off a policeman's helmet in the Swift Flapjack club's show is really her son.

'In fact,' says Mr. Appleyard, 'almost anything she owns may be on exhibition — except her husband.'

Why should husbands, he wants to know, be kept out of sight as if they were less interesting than the contents of the umbrella stand on a dry day? Many husbands are fully as worth exhibiting as needlepoint fire screens or Siamese cats. Why not a Spring Husband Show?

It would, he admits, like any other worth-while project take some thought and planning. Rules would have to be drawn up and strictly enforced. Ladies would not be allowed to exhibit more than one husband at a time. The wild and cultivated specimens would need to be carefully separated. Classification would have to be accurate. Mr. Appleyard suggests the following classes: Hardy annual husbands, husbands as perennial boarders, husbands for shady places, night-blooming husbands, and the different sorts of ramblers.

He thinks a detailed catalogue would help the public to get the real educational value of the show.

After earnest study of the spring flower catalogues, he has listed some of the varieties that he hopes will be included.

'Tall, very early, requires little care, will do well in almost any situation. Resists drought.'

'Robust, magnificent specimen. Sow in open sunny place such as golf links as soon as danger from frost is past. Needs plenty of moisture.'

'Best of the smaller sorts. Produces large sheaves of unexcelled bloom. Never forgets an anniversary. Good house plant.'

'Strong, vigorous, easily trained. Hearty feeder. Solid head of superb quality. Must be thinned out frequently. Green the year round.'

'Dignified, stately specimen, needs considerable enrichment. Tends to thin at the top unless protected. (Should not be confused with the perennial bachelor which it closely resembles.)'

Naturally the catalogue will contain the familiar warning: 'We do not give any warranty, express or implied, as to description, quality, temper, health, wealth, or any other points of any husbands we send out, and we will not be liable for any mistakes in filling orders. If the purchaser does not accept the husband on these terms, he should be returned at once.'

Another helpful feature of the show, Mr. Appleyard says, will be the competition for the arrangement of husbands and table decoration. The

ordinary husband is often morose and irritable in this situation, but by patience and perseverance even the wildest types can be subdued. Mr. Appleyard claims to have seen one peculiarly recalcitrant husband trained to sit quietly, dressed in the boiled and starched shirt of torture at a table set with three sizes of doilies, six kinds of forks, infant-sized soup spoons, blunt knives, eight Staffordshire figures, and a bowl containing two turtles, five goldfish, and one blue African water lily. The meal consisted chiefly of chopped parsley, quartered lemons, and whipped cream. The doctor in attendance testified that there was no increase in the exhibit's pulse or temperature.

'The cosmic urge to exhibit,' said Mr. Appleyard, 'does much for the human race. Thoughtful women owe it to their sex to make sure that triumphs like this are not hidden.'

'Get your hat, my cherub,' said Mrs. Appleyard. 'We are going to the Flower Show.'

So Mr. Appleyard got his hat.

April

CONVENIENT SHRUB

IT WAS FORSYTHIA TIME when Mrs. Appleyard visited the Arboretum — that loveliest day of the year when the green of maple flowers has so much gold and the yellow of forsythia so much green that they melt into each other. The elm trees are still lacy and light. The grass is so green that it seems to shine and it is as soft as plush to walk on.

Mrs. Appleyard wonders how people got along in the world before William Forsyth brought this flowering shrub from China. Without the yellow starred sprays that droop over walls, without the tangled thickets that catch the sunlight and hold it, without the patches that seem like sunshine itself on gray days, the time before the leaves come would be bleak indeed. For Mrs. Appleyard no spring is really spring unless she has stood for a few moments under a thirty-year-old forsythia and looked up

through it into the soft blue of an April sky. If there comes a late snowstorm with the forsythias in full bloom, their gilt spangles pricking through the silver, it is all the better, she thinks.

She always takes a camera with her to the Arboretum, partly because, in spite of many failures, she still thinks she will sometime catch in color the froth of blossom that the sun has brought out. There is a white tree barely touched with pink that in certain early morning lights has pale violet shadows in it. Mrs. Appleyard can see them. So far the camera has been blind to them.

Still the camera, though blind, has its uses. If you have a baby, a dog, or a camera with you, it constitutes an introduction. As Hugh said when someone remarked that it must be awful being stuck with a girl at a dance. 'Oh, I don't know. You meet some of the nicest girls that way.'

Mrs. Appleyard has met some very nice people through her camera.

On this particular April day she collected a story she likes. Mrs. Appleyard does not vouch for the story, but the old gentleman who had climbed on top of the stone post to see the flowering cherries better did. It was later, when they had finished comparing cameras and were sitting on a bench with rose-colored petals falling around them, that he told her the story. He said it was true because he heard it from a cousin of his who knew a cousin

of the man who cut down the bushes. When Mrs. Appleyard hears that something happened to someone that someone's cousin knows, she always suspects folk lore. There is something skeptical about Mrs. Appleyard, but there is this to be said for her: when she likes a story she never investigates it. She tells it now and then hoping that if it hasn't already happened, it will happen later.

At least she knows that it is true that a few years ago the great mass of forsythias that covered the slope near the lilacs was cut down. The shrubs had long needed pruning. They were so old that they had grown into each other. Their trailing branches were so interlaced that in certain places you could crawl underneath and find yourself in a cave full of soft green and yellow twilight. After the flowers were gone, the leaves were thick enough to keep out rain and hot sun. Pheasants and rabbits and small boys knew about these thickets. They were very convenient.

'In fact,' said the old gentleman, looking down shyly into the finder of his Graflex so that he could see Mrs. Appleyard's expression in it without her seeing him, 'they were so convenient that when this man my cousin knows and these other men cut down the bushes, they found that a whole family of Italians were living there. My cousin says it was their summer cottage.'

Mrs. Appleyard has a Graflex too. Naturally

she knows that trick of looking into the finder. She glanced quickly at the old gentleman on the other end of the bench. With the pink petals on his white hair and his gentle blue eyes and the number of photographic devices he had draped upon his person he made her think of the White Knight. He was beaming at a song sparrow that had begun to sing in a flowering almond. Surely this man was honest and innocent.

Even if he wasn't, Mrs. Appleyard likes to think about the Italians and their summer villa.

The members of the family who worked in the city would leave the Arboretum soon after the gates were opened. They would saunter in again with the late afternoon crowd and stroll about admiring the opening blossoms of the Sargent cherry or of the Bechtel crab until the outsiders began to go home. Before long they would be able to enter their front door unobserved. Not knowing their name, Mrs. Appleyard always thinks of them simply as the Forsythia family. She thinks Mr. Forsythia probably keeps a fruit and vegetable shop. Doubtless he would often bring home a bag of bananas or tomatoes. They would ripen splendidly in the pleasant twilight and even temperature of the cave. There were several children of school age. Mrs. Appleyard feels sure she has seen them on Saturdays picnicking together. There were twin bambini who would roll together in the

long grass and pelt each other with daisies. They never laid a finger on the lilacs or the azaleas even at night when all the intruders had gone home to their stuffy houses and the whole Arboretum belonged to the Forsythias.

Mrs. Forsythia and the girls used to do the family washing at the edge of the pond by moonlight. Mr. Forsythia grumbled sometimes about the number of pink and intimate garments that he would find damply draped around his bedroom. He was not a bad-tempered man. He was simply a man. Mrs. Appleyard has heard of a very distinguished clergyman who has expressed himself quite as firmly as Mr. Forsythia on this subject. What *he* said was that evening in his bathroom made him wish he were a Cowley father.

'How would you like it,' he asked with much of that fire that fills the pews on Sunday, 'if I washed out my union suit and hung it up over the bathtub?'

There is no good answer to this, so Mrs. Appleyard thinks it is better to go back to the Forsythias churning soap bubbles under a spring moon. It was by moonlight, too, that a small column of pale smoke could sometimes be seen ascending from Forsythia Lodge. Niccolo Forsythia, that rising young stonemason, had built a fireplace there. It carried off the smoke efficiently and sent forth into the sleeping Arboretum savory smells that made the dogs of Jamaica Plain twitch their tails and

whimper in their sleep. How pleasantly the steam from the kettle blended with the fragrance of lilacs and apple blossoms!

Mrs. Forsythia makes an especially succulent variety of spaghetti. The children have always said that it was never better than when they lived in the Arboretum and when, among the garlic and tomatoes and dried mushrooms, you were just as likely as not to encounter a bit of pheasant or rabbit. The temperature of the Lodge proved just right for a kind of red wine that Mr. Forsythia makes himself. The bread, a yard or so of it, was always brought home by Maria Forsythia on her way home from the beauty parlor where she works.

The ground, softened by thirty years of fallen leaves, was quite as comfortable as their beds in the North End tenement. The Forsythias are sociable people. Having lived all their married life in the district in Boston that is, next to Cairo, the most thickly settled place in the world, they naturally like company. At first Mrs. Forsythia felt she would be lonely away out in the country, but she said she would do it — for the sake of the children. This is a very powerful reason, as Mrs. Appleyard, who has often used it, knows. For the sake of their children parents buy more automobiles than they really want. They pay for music lessons for the tone deaf. They cram small boys into blue serge so that they may dance with young

ladies to whom they afterward refer graciously as 'those old bags of meal.' They set a good example by eating parsnips and they see the children's dentist twice a year. They have been known to make the supreme sacrifice and send them all to camp. Yes, parents are wonderful, and Mrs. Forsythia is no exception.

Luckily she was not lonely for any length of time. Her friends, having found the way, came often as she always begged them to do. The Lodge was always full over the week-ends. The guests often brought phonographs or accordions. That eerie, muffled music came not from a radio across the park, but from Forsythia Lodge, where the family and week-end guests were eating antipasto and crooning with their mouths full about returning to Sorrento.

None of them was really very anxious to return to Sorrento or beautiful Naples. They preferred life in the Arboretum — even when it rained. Their leaf and twig roof was surprisingly waterproof and for really bad storms they had an ingenious arrangement of umbrellas and the girls' cellophane raincoats. They caught all the rain-water they could off the points of the umbrellas. Mrs. Forsythia likes it for washing. Sometimes she would wake the boys up and send them out to take a shower. And Saturday nights they all swam in the pond. Floating soap — the gondola kind, of

course — was part of the equipment. In church on Sunday mornings there was no cleaner, better-groomed looking family than the Forsythias.

In fact, the whole thing was idyllic and Mrs. Appleyard thinks it was a great pity that the shrubs were ever cut down. However, they are responding to their pruning and perhaps in a few years...

May

I. SAP AND SAPS

II. INSPECTING THE BABY

I

AS SOON AS THE SAP has gone so far up in the maple trees that they can no longer be tapped, there are heard in many northern New England farmhouses the first faint stirrings that mean the wild geese and the antique hounds are on their way north. Then is the time when old flax wheels, wool winders, and candle moulds are routed out of the attic and piled in artless confusion on the back porch. Rheumatic Boston rockers and slat-back chairs with sagging seats — or, better still, with no seats at all — crawl out into the spring sunshine. Glass sauce dishes fully ten years old are carefully placed where the maximum amount of dust will dim their youthful radiance. Hooked rugs, mellowed with the patina that five years on the direct route between the barn and the kitchen sink alone can give, are shaken briskly to detach a few strands

here and there. Nothing antiques quicker than a hooked rug. On the line gay patchwork quilts are hung out to fade. Wobbly, spindly-legged tables support milk cans while they wait patiently for rain and lactic acid to dull their varnish.

All this time the frost is boiling out of the ground. At last the roads stop looking like melted lava. It is May, and visitors from the sophisticated neighborhoods begin to make their appearance. They are all filled with the noble ambition to be the first to overreach the gullible natives. More than one will bear home in triumph a fly-specked Currier and Ives print of 'The First Ride' or 'Little Manly' — that fat-faced, hydrocephalic, lace-collared prig — at practically no more than city prices. Others will be made happy by Early Sandwich (née Woolworth) plates. There may even actually be one real Sandwich cup plate in the loot — a genuine example of that dainty device for resting your teacup while you drink from the saucer.

What do people do with those muddy glass bottles with the profile of the Father of his Country — store teeth and all — and on the other side a squabby-looking version of the bird of freedom? Mrs. Appleyard does not know, but luckily they are very rare, so the problem does not confront her. Then there is the red and white hair receiver that Grandma brought from the World's Fair of 1893. Grandma was ninety-seven years old when she died

five years ago. As all antiques automatically adopt as their birthday that of their next-to-the-last owner, that makes the Venetian glass perfume jar (as it is now called) by the simplest sort of arithmetic one hundred and two years old. A child could do it. So can Mrs. Appleyard. It makes her proud of this native Yankee enterprise. She knows it must be a remarkable business because Mr. Appleyard says there is a customer born for it every minute. He says also that not all the geese that fly north are wild.

These sentiments did not prevent him from driving north with his wife one May morning. It had been raining softly the night before and the elm leaves had suddenly grown big enough to hide orioles. There were orioles flashing in and out of the leaves. The remark they make on this sort of morning, according to Mrs. Appleyard who has been giving the matter some attention, is: 'Sweet! Sweet! Sweet! Come along-long-long! Take a little walk!'

Whether the lady oriole is always late for appointments or whether the gentleman is naturally the impatient type, Mrs. Appleyard doesn't know. She can't help feeling that there is a certain amount of peevishness in his endearments. Mrs. Appleyard's advice to the young *débutante* would be to think it over. Better be sure he's not jealous — like Mr. Cummings, for instance.

Mrs. Appleyard does not know Mr. Cummings except by hearsay. Though otherwise a nearly perfect character, she has a habit of listening to the conversation of total strangers about their private affairs. She knows it would be more refined to become suddenly deaf when two girl friends begin to tell each other their life stories on the corner of Boylston and Arlington Streets, but she can't do it. Far from becoming deaf, her ear seems to extend itself until it is about the length of a small telescope. That was how she heard about Mr. Cummings.

Both the ladies were draped in the skins of many minks. Mrs. Appleyard was wearing that tweed coat affectionately known on Overbrook Hill as Old Ironsides or the Curse of the Appleyards. Until she remembered the flavor of the mink ranch at East Appleyard, she felt at first as if she really ought not to look in the window at the same Lowestoft tea-caddy as such elegant creatures. Of course, the ladies smelled of gardenias and heliotrope and other flowers that have not been invented yet. They did not in the least suggest that haunting flavor of dead fish that the east wind sometimes blows toward Appleyard Centre from the mink ranch. Still Mrs. Appleyard decided that she would look in the window, minks or no minks.

The lady whom it had taken the most minks to cover said, 'Well, I suppose the wedding has taken place since we met — and how is Mr. Cummings?'

She had that arch way of speaking that ought not to be allowed to anyone who weighs over a hundred pounds and that has such a fatal charm for those who have allowed nature to take its course.

Her friend laughed merrily.

'Why, dearie,' she trilled, 'you don't even know my name! I'm married, but not to Mr. Cummings. It turned out he was the jealous type. And jealousy — that's a thing I will *not* put up with in a man. Yes, he gave me a beautiful seven-hundred-and-fifty-dollar solitaire and I threw it at him right on this very corner ——'

And with that they moved on out of Mrs. Appleyard's life. She looked in the gutter to see if there were any diamonds gleaming in it. She is afraid that Mr. Cummings is stingy as well as jealous. There was not even a fifty-dollar stone in sight. Evidently the type of man that would pick a ring that had been thrown at him right off the street and use it over. Still Mrs. Appleyard, always tolerant, gave him the benefit of the doubt. It is just possible that he turned on his heel with the proper gesture of contempt and that some worthy street-cleaner found it. Mrs. Appleyard hopes she will see someone turn on his heel sometime. She has always wondered which heel it would be and what you do with the other foot.

Do orioles when flouted turn on their heels, she wondered. Really she has a very ill-regulated mind ..

On the May morning when the orioles came, the catbirds were there to copy those sentimental pleadings, only they couldn't help miaowing in the middle of them. The lilacs were beginning to open. The buds on the purple ones were wine-colored and the white ones were the color of Guernsey cream. Crab-apple trees had scarlet buds and petals that ranged from deep rose to white just shadowed with pink. There were patches of trillium like three-pronged stars and of narcissus with eyes like golden pheasants. The greenish ivory bells of the Solomon's seal sent out a fragrance like almonds as she brushed against them. She could almost see the Moonlight tulips bend back their pointed petals. The pansies were turning up their impish faces to catch the sun. She decided they were her favorite flowers — but then, as with books — or kittens — or children — her favorite is always the one she is looking at.

She likes daphne for its scent and its prim prettiness and its name. There are so many pleasant names for spring flowers — arabis, hyacinth, daffodil, dandelion. They were all busy blossoming that morning.

Mrs. Appleyard's garden is only a border and a bank, some rocky steps, and a woodsy corner under the elm, but if you kneel down to dig up dandelions it looks like a lot. Each blossom represents a triumph of mind over matter. Seventeen

forget-me-nots and a certain number of tulips are more exciting to her than the whole Public Garden complete with swanboats. She struggles against this egotism, but has not been able to do much about it.

It was a wrench to leave this magnificent display and to realize that by the time she came back the wistaria might have opened without her personal supervision. The wistaria was left over from Cicely's wedding. Mrs. Appleyard had planted it afterward. This would be the first time it had flowered since.

However, she did at last back out the car. Her bag, by an odd coincidence, was packed already. She had thought of everything, including solitude for car-backing. Mrs. Appleyard backs all right as long as there is no man present to make circular passes with his hands. The Appleyard garage presents some interesting hazards not always encountered in extricating cars. It was once a stable and still smells faintly of horses and old hay. This, according to Mrs. Appleyard, gives you the pleasantest things about having a horse and none of the drawbacks such as having to ride him.

Among the relics of the equine age is a small harness room with a cast-iron stove in it. This juts out on the right. To the left is the grain chute with the stalls behind it. The soapstone sink for use in washing the carriages is straight ahead.

There is also an interesting selection of scenery owned by the Overbrook Hill Dramatic Club. It is possible in moments of tension to put one fender through an apple tree in full bloom and with another to demolish a fireplace and part of the Roman Forum. Why the top of a Socony pump and a green pasteboard dragon should be included in this assortment is anybody's guess.

Mrs. Appleyard wasted no time in speculation. She missed every obstacle with a generous three quarters of an inch to spare and had the car purring gently in front of the house when Mr. Appleyard appeared.

Mr. Appleyard looked very magnificent in a Burberry that harmonized richly with the spring tints. It was the bronze of a young oak leaf with just a dash of burnt orange here and there. It brought with it a delicate flavor of peat smoke from the islands of Harris and Lewis that blended pleasantly with the horsey flavor of the car. Mrs. Appleyard has often thought of bottling the whole thing. She has already designed the bottle. It will have a horse's head for a stopper and a tweed label. She thinks it would be a real economy at about \$27.50 an ounce. Appleyard's Heather Mixture, she plans to call it.

'It will have,' she says dreamily, 'just a faint exquisite scent of the first puff of a Corona Corona, a suggestion of saddle soap, pine trees, freshly

curried horses, newmown hay, and burning leaves.'

We haven't much idea just how she plans to combine these fragrances. Neither, to tell the truth, has Mrs. Appleyard. That, however, is a detail.

She gave Mr. Appleyard those helpful instructions without which he would not be able to find his way to Appleyard Centre. This is strange, for after all he was born there.

She let Mr. Appleyard drive — pending good behavior, of course. She did not have to say so. It is a reservation always made when a good wife hands over the wheel to her husband.

She took out a pencil and a piece of paper, but these were not for keeping score on Mr. Appleyard's driving. She can do that in her head.

She likes to write about how New England looks. She travels often over the same country, but it is never twice the same. Mrs. Appleyard has a lot of grubby pieces of paper to prove the fact. That is, they would prove it if anyone could decipher them. Her handwriting is at best slightly Arabic and, with Mr. Appleyard passing cars with that inimitable élan of his, it gets to look like something a sheik might write while riding a camel. Besides, the paper is not of that uniform character that would look well in a steel filing cabinet: not even if, like Mrs. Appleyard, you painted the cabinet lacquer red and gold instead of that serviceable olive green that must cast such a gloom on business.

Mrs. Appleyard, we are sorry to say, is a paper hoarder. She tears off the backs of wedding invitations and saves letters that she began and thought better about sending. For years she depended on some left-over announcements of the Grange Pageant, Band Concert and Dance. When the children were in school, she used the backs of their pictures. So many of these sources have now dried up that her recent compositions have been on the backs of grocery lists. She begins on the backs, but often has to use the fronts, too, writing across whatever was on there first. This results in interesting information like Cream of Wheat Coffee Dishcloth Butter Sink-brush Pineapple being mingled with descriptions of the landscape.

On this particular day — probably because she was in a holiday mood — Mrs. Appleyard had a whole sheet with nothing at all on it except her address, the words ‘when you come to Boston,’ and a blot. The original shape of the blot seems to have been somewhat like a horseshoe crab, but Mrs. Appleyard, who is never idle a moment, had improved it during a telephone conversation so that it was now more like a wild goose. She began her morning’s work by drawing some clouds for the goose to fly among, but interrupted it by a clutch at the door handle.

Mr. Appleyard said mildly that she did not need to steer with the handle because he was not going off the road.

'Enjoy the spring,' he suggested. 'That's what you came for.'

Mrs. Appleyard obediently enjoyed it.

You go back almost two weeks in weather by the time you get to Appleyard Centre. The apple trees are still covered with tight red knobs. Cowslips are spilled sunshine in the ditches. Elm leaves are no bigger than squirrels' ears. There are adders'-tongues in the wet corner of the pasture. Bobolinks are singing as they fly. Maples still have red keys hanging among old-gold leaves, or yellow-green among green-yellow leaves, or pink among jade green. You can see what color they will be again in the fall. Sometimes, high up on the north side of a hill, maples are still in flower. That white patch on Catamountain is not rock: it's snow.

Mrs. Appleyard did not go north just to look at the landscape. She had a mission. It had to do with plumbing. Country water systems are an adventure in themselves. When conversation lags in the country, it can always be revived by mentioning the water supply. It is hardly safe to speak of artesian wells late in the evening. The guests are likely to stay all night. When Mr. Appleyard wants to entertain the men of the party, he takes them out to the barn and shows them the electric light plant and the pump.

This corresponds to going out to the stables and looking at the horses, as described in upper-class

English fiction. In Appleyard Centre it gives rather more pleasure than interviewing the livestock, because the visitors have already had quite a bit of social contact with horses that day. And with cows too.

Handsome Jerseys and Guernseys and Holsteins are an artistic note in the Appleyard Centre landscape, but a cow looks different, if you have to milk her twice a day, from the way she does if you approach her with a paint box or a camera. Mrs. Appleyard has learned something about different schools of thought on the subject of natural beauty. When she first came to the farm, she said something to one of her neighbors about the lady elm. It is the first thing city visitors notice and admire. It stands alone, shaped like a perfect wineglass, its stem wreathed with green, a small brook talking among forget-me-nots at its feet. Back of it slopes the hill with the wind making silver waves in the long grass.

Mrs. Appleyard's remarks about the elm — she thinks now they were rather gushing — were received in a polite silence. In some places silence means consent. Vermont is not one of them. After the pause had lasted long enough to show that no rudeness was intended, the farmer said gently: 'I can't say I like an elm.'

Mrs. Appleyard asked — a little hysterically, she thinks now — 'Oh, but why?'

'Toughest tree there is to cut,' replied her neighbor.

That there were two views of elms was a new idea to Mrs. Appleyard. She could understand how some people could like Stravinsky and Gertrude Stein and even rice pudding. And she realized that others did not care for Bach and Saki and Canadian cheese soup. But elms! Could there be two points of view about elms?

Yes; and she found there could be three. It was a quiet little old lady who looked at the same tree and said: 'You have a real pretty elm tree. I remember when the male elm stood beside it. It was too near the stream. The flood washed it down one spring. I don't know as I'd care for it near my house. A pasture elm alone like that seems kind of sad to me. Makes me think of us old folks. Standing alone.'

When she looks at the elm now, Mrs. Appleyard likes it better than ever. It seems more of a tree since she knows it can arouse both hostility and sadness. People still click cameras at it and it was the first thing Mrs. Appleyard looked for, the morning after the hurricane. The maples in the sugar place were down, but the elm was still standing serenely by the brook. A tough tree to cut or to blow down. A lonely tree and an independent one. Elms grow well in Vermont soil. Most Vermonters like them, but Mrs. Appleyard is just

as glad that everyone does not. Suppose everyone — except Mrs. Appleyard — liked one thing and that was those begonias with hairy red and green leaves. How would it be to wander always through a begonia grove? Suppose what everyone — except Mrs. Appleyard — decided to like was tripe! And Picasso in the blue period — a shade of blue in which Mrs. Appleyard has never looked her best.

If all tastes were the same, Mrs. Appleyard would never have got her case of stuffed birds. It was not by any means everyone's favorite antique. Yet to its present owner there is something romantic about tanagers, parakeets, hummingbirds, thrushes, and cedar waxwings all perched among that peculiarly unrealistic foliage.

'It gives me a tropical feeling,' she says.

The purchase is in fact a triumph.

Mr. Appleyard's view of the matter is a little different. When Sally asked about their trip, he said it would have been all right except for the accident to the car. Now the young, although they often sink into a reverie when genealogy, antiques, and household finance are discussed, can always be roused to animation by news of a brush between automobiles.

'What accident?' Sally asked excitedly.

'Your mother saw an antique shop. I didn't step on the throttle hard enough and it cost me fifteen dollars,' Mr. Appleyard reported.

It was then that he added, quite unnecessarily, that remark about the northern flight of geese. And that all the sap was not confined to sugar maples. However, when he said it he smiled, and besides Mrs. Appleyard remembers with what tender care he clutched to his chest the glass dome with the birds under it.

She forgives all.

II

'THIS WEEK-END,' said Sally, 'I have to go and see Agatha's baby.'

She spoke in the same tone that is commonly used for the mention of a dentist's appointment — a blend of boredom and bravado.

'It won't bite you — no teeth,' said Mrs. Appleyard soothingly. 'It will be quite small and look like a baked apple. The first small baby you see is always a shock,' she added. 'They are an acquired taste — like Toulouse-Lautrec. After a while you get to see that there are differences between them. By the time you were born I was able to see at first glance that you were a very remarkable and beautiful baby.'

'That won't help me about inspecting Agatha's,' Sally pointed out. 'You might tell me the technique.'

'Wait a minute,' said Mrs. Appleyard, 'I've lost my leg.'

This statement was no surprise to her daughter. Mrs. Appleyard has added to a long list of domestic vices the making of miniature furniture. The leg she alluded to was Jacobean. After rescuing it from among the chips that she had been letting fall where they might, she continued, sand-papering as she spoke: 'There are various methods of attacking the problem. There are the visitors who drop in any time. If you do that, you find everything in its natural state. I seem to remember that things are at about their most natural around nine-thirty in the morning. The nurse will be making the baby's formula. There will still be dust kittens under Agatha's bed and they won't have had time to get the baby out of his Arnold nightgown and into the jacket with the rosebuds you sent him.'

'I sent a blanket.'

'The principle is the same. The visitors who are remembered the longest are the ones who say, "Yoo-hoo, I'm coming right up" — and come. You are lucky if you find Agatha still in bed because you can sit down on the end of it, cross one foot over the other and swing it in time to whatever tune you happen to be thinking of. I always used to enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan rendered this way, but I daresay you know something more modern. A bit of boogie-woogie, perchance.'

'What do you know about boogie-woogie, pet?' Sally inquired.

'Fortunately for everyone — nothing.'

'I prefer Beethoven,' said Sally.

Mrs. Appleyard made two minute lines on what she said was her Spanish foot, and said: 'Well, then you can hum a few themes, slightly off key. If the conversation lags you can always offer to wipe the spots off the mirror. Unluckily you won't be able to give her much advice about bringing up her child. I always used to love it when the well-seasoned mothers dropped in and discussed their doctors and diseases I'd never even heard of and then cross-examined me about how much the baby gained last week. There's a way of raising the eyebrows when the mother says proudly that her baby never cries that makes her wonder whether she hadn't better be entering him for a good school for the feeble-minded. However, you are not an expert, so you had better not try it. You can forget what sex he belongs to, though, and you can walk right into his room and look at him. What do you care if it isn't fixed up? You might want to paint a still-life sometime called "After the Bath," and this is your chance to find out how a rubber tub looks when it is full of soapy water and interesting facts about crocheted bath sheets and safety pins. I had a nurse once who had hysterics for twenty minutes and threatened to leave — actually

got her hat on to go — because a visitor made a surprise attack on the nursery. Of course you can't always expect such results. But when you see the baby, you can ask if his head will always be that shape and point out resemblances between him and some of the less attractive of his father's relatives.'

'You are being frivolous,' Sally complained. 'What shall I really say?'

Mrs. Appleyard answered that the most obvious remarks were the best.

'Remember that Agatha thinks he's the most wonderful thing in the world anyway, so you don't need to think up anything elaborate — like saying he has a brow like Shakespeare or a chin like Clark Gable. She may not like either of them. Just say: "Why, he's got hair!" or, "He's got hold of my finger! — Honestly he's got a grip of iron." Don't say like a monkey — although that happens to be true. Any references to monkeys, gorillas, or chimpanzees are unfortunate in this connection.

'You can make any young mother happy simply by asking to see the baby's toes and observing that there are ten of them. Or by saying: "What a short upper lip he's got!" Even the weirdest-looking babies generally have. The creases in the back of his neck are a good subject too. It's curious how nice they are on a baby when you remember how they look on the man who sits in front of you

in the theatre.... If it's a girl, just say: "She's lovely — she's the image of you.""

'It is a girl — I think, but Agatha would never swallow that.'

'Last week perhaps not. Today she will feel no more trouble about it than a boa constrictor would over a young rabbit. But if you still feel unprepared — which I consider most unappreciative, considering the mental effort I've been giving this problem — I'll tell you the absolutely peerless remark. I was saving it, but I won't be stingy. It's just: "Oh, Agatha! Don't you wish she were twins?"' And you might,' Mrs. Appleyard added a little wistfully, and looking at the small chair she was holding, 'say that if she needs an extra grandmother, you know someone who has a lot of natural talent for it, although she is inexperienced — and at present unemployed.'

June

I. PROGRESS

II. A PERFECT SPOT

I

ON THOSE HOT NIGHTS when sleep is always just around the corner, Mrs. Appleyard likes to say over Henley's 'Ballade in Hot Weather,' that list of cool, refreshing things that begins:

'Fountains that frisk and sprinkle
The moss they overspill;
Pools that the breezes crinkle;
The wheel beside the mill
With its wet, weedy frill;
Wind shadows in the wheat,
A water cart in the street ——'

Suddenly one June night — one of those nights when maple leaves rustle like hot silk — she remembered that watering carts had vanished. How many years ago was it that the last one visited the corner of Blackthorn Road and paused in the shade of the trailing elm branches for its morning drink?

Ten? Fifteen? Mrs. Appleyard could not remember, but she knew how cool the water sounded as it splashed and gurgled into the empty tank.

How placid the driver was as he read the paper in the shade! He never hurried away even after he had turned off the water and detached the limp and dripping canvas hose from the tap. He was old and slow with a drooping moustache as white and drooping and shaggy as his horse. He had blue eyes as faded and misty as the blue paint of his cart—that blue of ancient wheelbarrows that have stood for years in sun and rain.

Children would sit on the curbstone and hold their bare toes under the dribble of the sprinkler. Sometimes a lucky one would be permitted to mount the seat beside the driver and, as the horse ambled off with a lurch and a rumble of wheels, be allowed to pull the string that started the fans of cool stinging spray. How refreshing it sounded as it turned the glaring white dust to slimy, gray mud and trickled into the gutter making little worms of moisture in the dryness! What a wave of cool damp air it sent into sun-parched rooms!

The watering cart has been improved away along with coon songs (now negro spirituals), waist lines with stiff belts around them and pins in the back that caught unwary fingers, French pugs, leg-o'-mutton sleeves, porter-house steak for breakfast, sleighbells and lambrequins. There were old

ladies then and they wore lace caps. Thrift and generosity were both virtues and could live in the same house. If a man's egg was boiled too long, he could slam the door and go to breakfast at his club. His wife would be crying at home as a decent woman should, not hurrying in town to manage her little Tea and Gift Shop. When she dried her tears she would think up something he would like for supper. Perhaps it would be Rhode Island johnny cake. It might be a deep-dish apple pie with hard sauce. A slice of bread made from whole wheat and served with powdered maple sugar and thick cream had a very soothing effect on some temperaments.

In the days of the watering cart no one had thought of making bread out of plaster of Paris and of slicing it to the thickness of a folded bathtowel. It did not taste like a bathtowel either. No one had discovered that sulphur and arsenic improve the flavor of apples. For placating angry husbands there were dried-apple turnovers without sulphur and fresh apple dumplings without arsenate of lead and with caramel sauce. You ate cheese with them. No one had found out that you could make cheese in twenty-four hours. When you made cheese, you began with the June milk that had the taste of new grass in it. A cheese weighed twenty-five pounds or more. It had to be turned every day till October. This exertion is now unnecessary and

very likely sooner or later someone will invent a detector to tell modern cheese from new rubber boots, because we are a very ingenious people.

Women were oppressed, of course, but their ankles were still exciting. When Mrs. Appleyard was eighteen, her street suit was made of black broadcloth and had a train. It must have been a pretty sight to see her manoeuvre the train through mud and slush to the street-car. In moments of haste it is possible that she showed fully three inches of a thick silk stocking chastely clocked with white, and even a hint of the blue ribbon that ran coyly in and out of the eyelet embroidery of her petticoat. Not her flannel petticoat naturally. That triumph of striped viyella, gathers, and feather stitching stopped just below her knees, about where her new tweed skirt does now.

It seems sad to think of a girl sewing five yards of brush braid around the bottom of a skirt and running in all that ribbon and then having practically no amusement of a cultural nature. The arts were in an untutored state. If you listened to Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony' you had to do so uninspired by centaurs like flabby life guards or pale blue centaurettes as classic as Gypsy Rose Lee. Painters did portraits with only one eye on each side of the head. Horses in sculpture looked strong enough to carry their riders and as a rule gave no obvious signs of spavin, glanders, or blind

staggers. Poets played fair with their readers. You could tell it was poetry. Each line began with a capital letter. The ruder words of the Anglo-Saxons were kept for writing on sidewalks in yellow chalk. People had to put up with the acting of Bernhardt, Duse, Irving, Terry, Forbes-Robertson, and Mrs. Fiske. The Grapes of Wrath were still stored. Yes, it was a dull and untutored time.

Still it had its points. It was etiquette for men to send girls books, flowers, and candy — and they did. Mrs. Appleyard, who remembers happily certain boxes of marrons glacés and sprays of orchids, has informed her daughters that this is fully as good as the code that allows men to present strings of emeralds — only they don't.

In fact, by the time she has thoroughly waked herself up with thoughts of the good old days, the only things she can think of that are improvements in the age of cellophane are orange juice and electric lights.

But of course she'll feel better in the morning.

II

THE FIRST WEEK in Appleyard Centre always went slowly. Each day was a lifetime in itself. The young Appleyards had to check up on every-

thing: the new calves, the state of the diving raft at the pond, every corner of the barn and the elderly eggs — fine for throwing — found therein, the Sucker Hole and its crop of frogs. They must inspect the old picnic places — Jump-on-Apple-Tree Pasture and Spilt-the-Lemonade Hill. They must swim in the pot hole in Hunger Brook and build up the fireplace on Neuter Hill (so named by Hugh, a Latin student, because it is in Middlesex). They must paint the Model A with a coat of blue for making blue jays scream and faint. They must find new roads for it to scale.

Was there a notch in the hills that had never been crossed since the flood of 1927? Now was the time. On one of these expeditions Mrs. Appleyard was sent ahead to make sure there were no bog holes. This is a wise precaution, and if more cars had out-walkers, it would be, Mrs. Appleyard considers, a good thing. There are several advantages. The type of exercise changes. It is obtained along the ground and gradually instead of violently and vertically. By anticipating mud holes it is often possible for both walker and driver to ride the last fifteen miles instead of walking it.

Mrs. Appleyard is considered a fairly good advance guard. Her only drawback, according to Cicely, that Ben Hur of Appleyard Centre, is that her mother gets interested in hermit thrushes and flowers. Cicely asserts that she was nearly bogged

once because Mrs. Appleyard knelt down by a particularly treacherous soft spot and talked to a showy lady's-slipper. Mrs. Appleyard always looks guilty when this episode is dredged up out of the past. To tell the truth she does think it is better to talk to flowers than to pick them; that it's no sillier — only sounds so.

She generally changes the subject by telling how she looked back and saw Cicely standing up on the seat as she drove in order to be sure that she was choosing the right rocks to go between. Mrs. Appleyard thinks it would be easier to drive this way if you were a kangaroo. Cicely says no, a baboon. This topic is good for an argument any time and Mrs. Appleyard's habit of chatting with goldfinches, pond lilies, and butterflies can be forgotten.

The family, however, is not likely to forget the day the pond lilies opened. Mrs. Appleyard has a pool with three lilies in it. She tries to be modest about this achievement. To get a pool constructed in Appleyard Centre, to provide it with water lilies, and stock it with goldfish is not a project accomplished with any mere idle wave of the hand. It is true that the frogs who live there came of themselves without any cajoling, but everyone else involved had to be wheedled.

Perhaps her worst difficulty was with Mr. Appleyard. He objected when she said that it

would be perfectly easy to wade out and pull up the lilies. He alleged that she would be (A) lost in the mud and (B) that she would spoil her shoes. This was manifestly foolish as no shoes that Mrs. Appleyard ever wears in Appleyard Centre are susceptible of spoiling. Besides, there was a nice dry tussock right near the edge. A slight wrestling match occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Appleyard on the edge of the pond. People going by in automobiles found it fascinating to watch. Mrs. Appleyard mentioned this interest to her husband whose back was to the road.

'They just think I am saving you from drowning,' said Mr. Appleyard calmly.

'Not at all,' Mrs. Appleyard asserted, 'they think I am trying to drown myself to escape a fate worse than death. You had better unhand me or I scream.'

Mr. Appleyard, who knew that she was fully capable of a really bloodcurdling yell, unhandled her.

About two years later the lilies were ready to open.

Now, Mrs. Appleyard believes what she reads in print, and one of the prettiest nature passages she has ever read concerned a pond full of lilies. The writer claimed that he was on the pond just before dawn and that as the sun's rays touched the lilies they began to pop open all around him,

filling the air with fragrance. The impression Mrs. Appleyard got was that the whole pond was just one aquatic corn-popper. There was a good deal about the first rays through translucent petals and golden stamens yearning toward the dawn.

Unfortunately it is NOT SO.

As Mrs. Appleyard knows now.

The young gentleman thought up that delectable description in bed, wrote it there, and was furthermore probably never out of it before noon in his life. This is Mrs. Appleyard's opinion, and if she sounds a little sour, it is because she actually got out of bed at dawn to superintend the lily-popping.

She is now in a position to state that water lilies are lethargic flowers that open languidly, a tenth of an inch a minute. Also they never move while you are looking at them, but always while you are tickling a frog with a suitable piece of grass while he sits on a lily pad and pretends you can't see him. Sometimes a lily slyly flips open a petal as much as a quarter of an inch while you are eating a thimbleberry. The entire family worked in shifts on the lily spying, but no one ever saw a petal move. However, at the end of three hours the lilies were all open and Mrs. Appleyard was able to go in and attend to that peach pandowdy that she had promised to make. It had a soothing effect on the family nerves. They let the goldfish supervise the lilies now.

One of the activities of the first week at Appleyard Centre is to replace the goldfish. They are supposed to increase and multiply and ultimately become carp like Louis XV's, but somehow they always vanish during the winter. Therefore, Mrs. Appleyard drives to the nearest Five and Ten, a mere matter of eleven miles, and chooses her fish. One year she foolishly chose a black one. He was a fish of great personal charm and just as visible in the pool as a white rabbit in a snowstorm. He cost extra, too.

The fish are always carried home in a carton that tells the world that it must not be used except for baked beans, potato salad, shellfish, and ice cream. Mrs. Appleyard does not know just which head goldfish come under. There are certainly no shells on them. She always feels a little nervous as she walks through the streets carrying her illegal package. Suppose she met a baked-bean inspector? Or a fish and ice-cream warden — or something?

So far she has been safe. The only real embarrassment was the time a new bump in the road — she knows all the old ones — tossed the car skyward suddenly and the cover came off the clandestine carton. All of the water and most of the fish flowed into the car. Sally scooped up the fish, but the water was too widely distributed to be really useful. The fish began to gasp.

'Run into that house and ask for some water,' Mrs. Appleyard said.

Sally ran.

'Please may I have some water for my goldfish?' Mrs. Appleyard heard her pant as she reached the screen door on the side porch.

All the owner of the kitchen said was: 'There's the sink.'

So the goldfish were saved and Mrs. Appleyard has a fascinating topic of speculation. Just what, she wonders, would surprise a Vermonter. Suppose you stop at the door and say: 'May I have some hay for my elephant?'

Does she simply give a jerk of the head and say, 'There's the barn?'

Or if you ask, 'Could you spare a little meat for my lion?' does she reply, 'There's the refrigerator?'

Mrs. Appleyard has decided that she probably would. Anyway, judging by this experience and others, she is sure any appeal for help is always met with practical kindness. Are there better people than these anywhere? The answer is no.

With watering the goldfish, hanging curtains, trying to remember where the pewter was hidden last fall, the first week slowly adds itself to other weeks that have gone. The second week is shorter. The others slip past with annoying rapidity. Before summer has really begun, someone sees golden-rod and groans, 'Summer's over.'

Sometimes on looking back over the summer, Mrs. Appleyard thinks that no two meals were ever eaten in the same spot. The sight of a paper cup makes her faintly dizzy. She begins to think wistfully of damask napkins and Chippendale chairs. She feels stiff and spavined from always sitting where there is no place for her legs to hang over. She begins to ponder over insoluble problems such as why, after putting down the robe from the car so that no one will have to sit on the damp ground, everyone uses it for a tablecloth. Why devilled ham and peanut butter, the two thirstiest substances in the world, always appear at picnics where someone forgot the water, is another topic for a little dark brooding. Sometimes Mrs. Appleyard even stays at home, but of course that only means that she picnics there. No woman left alone can resist a tray, and a salad made out of whatever there is in the refrigerator.

Once, indeed, at a time like this, Mrs. Appleyard did something really desperate. Appleyard Centre, measured by its distance from a place to buy a lamb chop suddenly, is a long way off from anywhere. However, it can easily be reached by motorists, sometimes seven at a time. There is something about the grip of the hands on the steering wheel that inspires people to drop in. Sometimes they send telegrams and special delivery letters. These come in the mail bag — gen-

erally while the guests are eating supper. Mrs. Appleyard does not mind. She is accustomed to these American folkways, so she has an Emergency Shelf.

It is a pleasure to look at it with its caviar gleaming through glass darkly, its shad roe wrapped in scarlet and gold. Little wild strawberries are for emergencies and so are small cheeses in earthenware jars. Shortbread from Scotland is tightly sealed up against domestic crises, and the best white grapejuice will be uncorked only as a last resort. It stands in amber elegance, looking calmly past the common purple sort. The largest and best stuffed olives are on this shelf and so is the cassava bread. That column of dull silver is really a stack of tins of French sardines and the primrose yellow is a terrine of pâté which no suitable occasion has ever claimed.

Usually looking at this array is satisfaction enough, but Mrs. Appleyard, left alone one cold evening, and thoroughly enjoying the solitude, decided that it was about time she became a crisis herself.

‘Why,’ she argued, reasonably and convincingly, ‘should everyone be an emergency except me?’

Acting on this inspiration, she helped herself to a can of black bean soup and, feeling pretty guilty, boiled an egg to go in it. While the egg was cooking, she took some of Major Grey’s own private

brand of chutney and combined it with cheese to make a very active form of appetizer — as if she needed any! She drank yellow tomato juice, too, the red variety not being exotic enough for this orgy, and she finished up this career of crime by opening a new box of sugared figs.

Burning up some especially handsome pieces of white birch and reading *Pleasures and Palaces* and the *Turn of the Screw* for the eighth time, instead of balancing her checkbook, put the finishing touches to Mrs. Appleyard's evening of dissipation.

Ordinarily she finds it more nourishing and entertaining to join the others in whatever type of picnic is on the calendar for the day. People sometimes talk as if all picnics consist of eating lettuce sandwiches with ants in them. The Appleyards have more than one form of torture to apply to the guest of the moment. There are, for instance, the Cut and Spread, The Paper Bag, The Hot-Pail Lunch, and The Stone Fireplace.

The first is the improvised picnic. Someone says: 'There's going to be a sunset.' Someone else says: 'We can get to Maple Hill!' Mrs. Appleyard seizes a basket and begins to hurl loaves of bread and jars of things into it. Sally puts knives and napkins into another. Water and milk go into thermos bottles. Hugh says: 'There's half a chocolate cake,' and his mother calls: 'Bring it along!'

They are out of the yard and on an eligible hill-top, spreading themselves weird and wonderful sandwiches before the first wisp of cloud begins to turn rose and gold. Naturally they are much too busy to look at it, but there is something rather opulent about having a sunset around just not to look at. Perhaps the prize sunset hors d'oeuvre for nature lovers was the doughnut which Stan split and filled with cream cheese, peanut butter, sardines, and raspberry jam. It takes a rugged constitution even to think of this sort of meal.

The Paper-Bag Picnic is for mountain climbers. They gather around the table in the winter kitchen and make whatever sandwiches their morbid fancy dictates, wrapping them in waxed paper, putting them into new paper bags supplied by Mrs. Appleyard, and writing their initials outside. This does away with anyone's remarking in a peevish tone, 'Who made all these jam sandwiches?' or, 'There aren't any ham-on-rye left.'

The paper bags and oranges and small cans of tomato juice all go into Sally's pack. Sally will not climb mountains unless she is allowed to carry the pack. She says it gives her something to lean against. Mrs. Appleyard knows they will eat like cannibals that evening and plans accordingly.

The Hot-Pail Lunch is whatever was going to be for lunch anyway, cooked beforehand and put into thermos jars. A freezer of ice cream goes along

with this sometimes and always enough lemonade for several camels. This is the most comfortable kind of picnic — if no one has forgotten the plates. There is something unappetizing about creamed chicken served on a shingle...

The great virtue of the Stone Fireplace Picnic is that it does away with that awkward experience known as Finding the Perfect Picnic Spot. The Appleyards have built stone fireplaces in enough perfect spots in northern Vermont so that they can always reach one that has everything — sunshine, shade, running water, and a view to turn your back on while you eat. They are generally equipped with a waterfall and a fifty-foot pot hole. The young Appleyards prefer a place where the easiest way to get into the pool is to be lowered over the falls on a rope.

How did Mrs. Appleyard get involved with these people anyway? Of course, as Sally once said: 'Poor Mother, you're not an Appleyard — you're only related to us by marriage!'...

A patch of shade is always provided where she can read a good book and not know too much about what is going on. She is also allowed to keep the fire going — a task that she very much prefers to swimming. She is happy that she has reached an age when she does not have to pretend to like things she does not like. Mrs. Appleyard admires horses — in color prints. She likes skiing in the

movies and water in a glass. It is also agreeable in the bathtub or in a hot-water bottle. Some landscapes are improved by a certain amount of it. It sounds soothing on a pebbly beach. The voice of a brook running by night is good to sleep by. Mrs. Appleyard wishes no closer contact. She knows how she looks in a bathing suit, for one thing.

There is a good fireplace if you drive through Smugglers' Notch and then follow a series of back roads that are apparently going nowhere in particular. You roll, by permission of the owner, under several barbed-wire fences — Mrs. Appleyard is better at this than you might think — go along by a stone wall, through a pine grove, and there you are, all ready to hitch your rope to a tree and swing yourself down over a thirty-foot waterfall — or not, just as you choose.

The last time the Appleyards went, they found some other people there. They were eating, not swimming. Mrs. Appleyard got to know them quite well while her family — there happened to be about twenty of them that day, as she had borrowed a few — were swimming.

One woman, after watching the rope trick for a while, came, looking slightly green, up to Mrs. Appleyard and said: 'Why do they do it? Will you tell me why they do it, and why you let them?'

Mrs. Appleyard, who was making hashed-brown

potatoes to go with the steak, pushed the smoke out of her eyes while she was framing a reply that would cover the whole subject clearly and briefly, and finally answered: 'Well, you see we're all school-teachers.'

This explanation, while not strictly true, seemed to satisfy and calm the questioner. She came over pretty soon and offered Mrs. Appleyard some of her own home-made jelly roll and watched with a pitying air while Mrs. Appleyard ate it. It was excellent. As the entire crowd of Cliff Dolphins soon returned, equipped with the usual number of arms and legs, Mrs. Appleyard feels that she acquired it under false pretences. She takes this opportunity to apologize and say that she was really enjoying the picnic and that she does not care much for the rôle of martyred mother. Martyrs are all right in their way and so are mothers, but she doesn't think they ought to be mixed.

For her epitaph she thinks she would like to have chiselled, preferably on any piece of stone that happens to be lying around the pasture, what Sally said, when she was about six.

They were driving along a road that followed the curves of a hill and looked off toward other hills — as Vermonters call mountains. There was a pasture with maples along a stone wall and a brook not far away.

'We had a picnic there once,' Sally asserted.

The other children said no, that they hadn't.

To Mrs. Appleyard the point seemed hardly worth arguing. If they had not already picnicked there, obviously they would sooner or later. She herself did not remember the place and said so. The others looked triumphant until Sally convinced them in these words: 'But don't you remember? That was the picnic where Mother was so cross.'

Mrs. Appleyard thinks that will look very nice, cut on a flat slate stone and left lying under the maples facing the mountains — hills, she means. She hopes that there will be plenty of children to put their paper cups of lemonade on it and to tuck the crusts of their sandwiches under it. Perhaps sometime one will dig the lichens out of the letters and say: 'Oh, yes! This is the picnic place where my great-grandmother was so cross.'

Mrs. Appleyard does not want any other monument.

July

I. THE LAWN

II. SHELLING PEAS

I

THE APPELYARDS have a lawn in Vermont that is practically level. In the hill country any piece of ground not permanently on the bias is a rare treasure, so they always mention the Lawn with a capital letter.

It was not always level. When Mrs. Appleyard first saw it, the ground sloped several feet and was covered with a peculiarly active brand of witch grass. The least interesting third of a dead elm tree thrust itself out of a sprangly thicket of dying lilacs. Burdocks and dandelions flourished with tropical vigor. Considered as a jungle it was a great success, yet to Mrs. Appleyard there almost immediately occurred the idea that it could be a Lawn. The male population was not openly hostile to this inspiration. It was simply in favor

of letting nature take its course as it had been doing with such marked success.

One reason why men are languid about women's schemes is because it is the men who have to carry them out. They like leaning against the barn better — for some reason. Any woman regards a man as simply a certain amount of canned labor. If a man is happily leaning against a wall in the shade, she feels that he is defrauding her of her property. The battle of the sexes has been represented as a struggle of some violence. Mrs. Appleyard says it is really only man's inertia on one side and woman's ideas on the other. Who was it who first had the idea that a house would be nicer than a cave? She is sure that it was not a caveman.

Women do not, it is true, harness waterfalls, nor invent sewing machines, nor understand that to move a stone you put your weight on the end of an iron bar instead of breaking your back. Why should they? They tell the men what results they want and the natural lethargy of the men makes them produce results the easiest way. Then they can go back in the shade.

In Appleyard Centre it is often stated that a woman can throw more out of the window with a spoon than a man can bring in with a cart. This tribute to woman's superior activity is sometimes followed up by mentioning that a woman can

think of more things in a minute than a man can do in a week.

Mr. Appleyard is of the opinion that the originator of this saying had a wife who was mentally retarded. Mrs. Appleyard, a truthful woman and good-natured, especially when she has had her own way, admits that it was more work to make the Lawn than she had thought. In the same paragraph she generally adds that she did not know that Ed Wilton was going to blow the elm into the side of the house with his dynamite. She had suggested cutting down the elm and digging out the stump.

At this point Mr. Appleyard says kindly that anyway the Lawn is a great success. It is true that if there were more grass on it and less chickweed, clover, self-heal, and thyme, it would be slightly more like the turf of the Overbrook Tennis Club, but then it might have to be treated with more respect.

Perhaps the croquet era was its busiest period. Why this furious sport was ever considered a pastime for ladies in crinoline has always been a mystery to Mrs. Appleyard. Of course she can see that a hoopskirt might be a convenience, because under it might be carried on many little adjustments of the position of the ball. Still even with this device it is hard to see how the game can ever have been a peaceful one. There must even

then have been ankles that stung from the impact of the ball. Shins must have been black and blue from accidental contact with mallets. Wickets must have been tripped over and have retaliated amidships, setting diaphragms heaving. Ears must have rung with accusations of chicanery, robbery, and piracy. There must always have been those discussions about who should play with the red ball.

Mrs. Appleyard wonders if her parents, too, were tempted to enter the fray and lay about them with mallets, letting pretty much anything happen to the chips of the old blocks. She learned from her mother to apply cookies at moments of tension. Croquet is a hungry game — a good thing, she thinks, for she likes to live dangerously and improvise as she cooks. The results are often interesting, but the end product is sometimes a batch of what are known in the family as choke-dogs. Croquet players have been known to absorb a plateful of these delicacies and never notice that the baking powder was forgotten.

Deck tennis is a hungry game too. It lasted on the Lawn until the ring was lost under the Corn Barn. Mr. Appleyard had the Corn Barn moved so that Mrs. Appleyard could have a quiet place. There is a theory that no one ever disturbs her while she is there. Sally printed a sign that says, DO NOT DISTURB AT ANY TIME, and tacked

it up right under one of the traces of red and yellow corn that hang by the door. So whoever does knock at the door always apologizes politely for disturbing her.

'I hope you won't mind if I bother you just a minute,' is the formula.

Mrs. Appleyard is too cowardly to say that she does. Besides, she is supposed not to be disturbed because she is supposed to be working. She has long been a missionary to Hitchcock chairs. She restores old trays so handsomely that their makers would be surprised. She might not wish her elbow joggled or her neck breathed down while she is painting. Yet, as a matter of fact, she may only be enjoying the wide pine panelling that the boys brought from the little old house that Grandmother Appleyard discovered across the valley. She may be standing at the window looking at Spruce Mountain as the morning mist burns off it. She may be supervising the bluebirds as they train up their families among the chokecherries. Sometimes she is simply listening to the wind and the rain on the roof or to the sound of swifts in the chimney. Smoke annoys them and they flutter their wings angrily. Very likely she is just standing in front of the fire looking up at Audubon's picture of a ginger jar and a piece of cheese on a fluted plate and two impish mice. She may be gloating over the old glazed chintz at the windows and

wishing for another auction like that. In fact there is no reason why she should not be disturbed and there is this to be said for the Corn Barn; while she is in it everyone else can count on peace and quiet.

The Corn Barn is weathered to the same silvery gray as the stone wall back of it. Standish got the old ox-bow from the barn and hung it over the door in a position in which no ox would wear it. The entire population of Appleyard Centre helped to put the big millstone in place for the doorstep. Mrs. Appleyard knows where there is another, but, being tactful, she is not going to mention it for five years or so.

The neighbors seem to like the Corn Barn and the Lawn on Fourth of July evening. Mrs. Appleyard, who has learned after about a quarter of a century of harsh experience that this evening can be one of the frostiest and crispest of the season the Vermonters call summer, always has a good fire in the Corn Barn and plenty of starchy refreshments. She lights all the candles in the tin sconces because she feels that candlelight is kind to complexions of those who are chilled to the bone, including hers. Fortunately most of the guests keep warm by dancing. Others have learned to bring steamer rugs. Mrs. Appleyard herself gets a good deal of exercise on the accordion.

Sometimes there is a pale green moon, but if there isn't, Hugh turns on imitation moonlight

from some antique automobile headlamps that he found in one of his favorite dumps. Some of his mother's traits seem to be coming out in Hugh. The Lawn looks splendidly velvety and green in the moonlight — real or artificial. After it is turned on comes that moment common to all parties when the Appleyards wonder whether anyone will come. Half an hour later arrives the moment of panic when they wonder if they squeezed enough lemons. White trousers and flowered dresses begin to flicker in and out of the shadows in Boston Fancy, Hull's Victory, Green Mountain Volunteers. Jefferson and Liberty keeps everyone spinning until there is no breath left in any lungs. Yet they revive. There is a loud clashing of swords (wooden) and the sword dancers run on. Their feet thud softly on the grass as they grasp sword points and whirl into the ring. They weave over and under the swords. The accordion pants out a monotonous little tune and Mrs. Appleyard's arms ache.

Suddenly the swords are woven into a silver star and the strong white figures run back into the darkness swinging the star back over their heads from one hand to the next. The lookers-on take their hands out from under their rugs long enough to clap.

Now the dancers are thirsty. Mrs. Appleyard makes more of that fruit punch of hers every year

than she did last, but somehow it always vanishes. So do the oatmeal cookies, those irregular circles of gold and brown lace. These are luckily not choke-dogs.

When Mrs. Appleyard is asked how to make them, she begins vivaciously, 'You take a pound of butter.'

At this point a certain vagueness creeps into the eye of the listener. Mrs. Appleyard realizes sadly that she is wasting her zeal. She could include garlic and cayenne and no one would ever notice. About the punch she becomes evasive: she has been improvising again, but there are certainly on Fourth of July always strawberries in it. Later there is a raspberry-shrub period that finds favor with some thoughtful drinkers.

When the last drop is gone comes the time for sparklers. Any child big enough to run has one and they all run. The sparklers go dipping, swirling, swooping. They are snowflakes that spit fire. The Lawn is a dark pool spangled with moving lights. Camptown Races is the tune. Doo-da, Doo-da, puffs the accordion. The fizzing stars go shooting up in the air. One splutters and fades to a red point. The owner runs to Cicely and plunges the glowing wire into a pail of water beside her. The sparkler goes out with a hiss as Cicely lights a new one from her candle. Off it goes, making wide, flashing circles through the darkness, and joins the whirling ribbon again.

Cicely is holding another sparkler near the candle. Mrs. Appleyard has time to notice the play of lights — candlelight, moonlight, sparkler-light — on her smooth dark head and intent face. No wonder Tom stands beside her and doesn't look at anything else; but even Tom cannot see how she looked when she ran the fastest and leaped the highest of any child on the Lawn.

The last sparkler is lighted and goes out. Children are dragged up to Mrs. Appleyard and mutter the old formula: 'Thankyouverymuch-haddanicetime.'

Motors start, headlights set the shadow of trees moving across the Lawn.

Pretty soon everyone is in the kitchen talking over the party. Tom and Cicely stay because they know that no party is legally finished until it has been talked over.

Mrs. Appleyard says: 'I forgot to have any punch — was it all right?'

'Super de luxe,' says Stan, but Sally suggests in a pained tone that she thought she saw a piece of rhubarb floating among the strawberries.

'It was in the ice-chest,' Mrs. Appleyard says weakly. 'We had it for lunch yesterday and it's a lovely color.'

'All of which is true of beets,' says Sally, with a sternness not entirely undeserved.

Mr. Appleyard says not to put any ideas into her

head. He adds that there were eighty-five people — five more than last year.

Cicely yawns and says dreamily: 'What I'd like to know is — who are those two blondes I saw going upstairs. Do they live here?'

Mrs. Appleyard tries to explain just whose cousins they are. She says guiltily that it is a long way to a hotel — a geographical fact well known to her family.

Sally gives a low moan. Well she guessed whose room they have. 'Tourists accommodated,' she announces. 'I am the three bears. Who's been sleeping in my — ?'

'Hush, darling, the stovepipe hole,' murmurs her mother. 'I knew you wouldn't mind just for one night. I moved your things.'

'I love it, precious,' Sally says cheerfully. 'It's the gypsy in me.'

'What fun it is up here,' says Cicely, 'always something going on. Isn't it dull down at our house, Tom?'

'No,' says Tom, and after drying the punchbowl and eating the last of the cooky crumbs they go off down the road.

'In spite of rhubarb and roomers,' Sally says forgivingly, 'it was a nice party.'

Hugh comes in from the Carriage House where the boys sleep.

'The Warrens forgot Johnny. He's asleep in my bed. What shall I do with him?'

'Leave him there,' says Mrs. Appleyard. 'They'll come back for him if they want him. When you know someone has mislaid something, always leave it where you found it. Then they'll know where to look.'

'Me for the porch hammock, then,' says Hugh. 'Johnny looks to me like the type that kicks.'

'Well,' says Mr. Appleyard, 'I'm certainly glad we had the Lawn graded. It makes things so much more sociable — just as your mother said it would.'

II

'ONE OF THE MOST STARTLING developments of modern times is the presence of the green pea,' Mr. Appleyard said, with that slight air of gloom that is so becoming to his handsome set of features.

'Chicken and peas! Chicken and peas!
When a girl lunches, it's all that she sees,'

Sally intoned.

The child can't help this sort of thing. It's hereditary in the Appleyard family to burst into doggerel. Sally was only four when she suddenly addressed her mother with the following sentiment:

‘Collie dogs at an early age
Like to eat peanuts and sausage and sage.
Collie dogs when they are old
Like to rot their teeth on gold.’

There was further information to the effect that collie dogs when they were young liked to bark and pant with tongue . . .

No one needs to be surprised that Mr. Appleyard looked more cheerful and added:

‘And when men go to dinner — to make the plot thicken —
It’s peas and it’s chicken — it’s peas and it’s chicken!’

His wife did not even groan, being used to it, and at once admitted that there is something monotonous about being able to serve peas every day in the year. It is true, she says, that peas, frozen as they leave the vines in New Mexico or California, rushed eastward in refrigerator cars with lumps of ice lurking among them, bought by the pound, shelled in basement kitchens, and served about thirty-nine to a person in silver vegetable dishes are only a feeble, though pleasant, imitation of the real thing.

She knows that peas frozen in a chunk and carried home in a neat carton are the bride’s best friend, but that just makes her glad that she took up that career when friendship was a less chilly business. Real peas, she considers, should be measured — if they are measured at all — by the peck. For anyone with a mathematical mind a

pound to a person before the peas are shelled is about right. Mrs. Appleyard, however, thinks in terms of baskets. 'The big brown basket heaping full,' she will say; or, 'There are only eight of us. Take the willow basket near the stove.'

To be at their best for Mr. Appleyard they must be 'telephone' peas, grown in New England, tender green globes of New England sunshine and rain. They must be sown as soon as the frost is out of the ground. Then they will be ready in July. Mrs. Appleyard thinks they are best if they are picked when the sun is shining on them and the pods hang like pieces of translucent jade in the warm green twilight of the vines. They should be cooked within three hours of the time they are picked. Half an hour is better. They should be brought to the table in a capacious dish, preferably a deep bowl of honest brown earthenware so hot that it cannot be passed around, but must stand steaming fragrantly until it is empty. It is always empty. Mrs. Appleyard long ago gave up the idea of a few left for the vegetable salad for the Grange supper or enough for a cream soup tomorrow.

Opinions differ about cooking peas. Many ways are good. The purest taste (which is, of course, Mrs. Appleyard's) allows them to be cooked no longer than five minutes in little enough water so that it all vanishes. She likes no seasoning

but a little salt and generous lumps of golden butter that disappear while they blend with the sweetness of the peas. Some people add a dash of sugar to them while they boil. Mrs. Appleyard considers this a confession of defeat before you start. The sugar would be in the peas themselves if they were picked young enough and recently enough. Peas that need sugar, she says, are nice for pigeons.

There are people who pour thin cream among them and eat them comfortably from a saucer with a spoon. Others add a sprig of mint, but this Mrs. Appleyard considers effete, a dangerous attack on Vermont independence. It was not to spoil the flavor of peas with mint that the Green Mountain Boys took Ticonderoga. Neither does she look kindly upon the practice of adding lettuce leaves and chopped chives. Peas that need such treatment should be made into soup, she says. She speaks sadly rather than sternly on these topics, and she admits that there are days — hungry days with a northwest wind blowing — when people of Vermont ancestry rightly yearn for peas cooked in the same dish with tiny new potatoes, enriched with small cubes of salt pork, and mellowed with thick yellow cream. She even cooks them that way for Mr. Appleyard.

No matter how they are cooked, if the subtlest perfection of flavor is to be enjoyed, they should be

shelled by the family: shelled, not in any kitchen — no matter how sanitary, nor how gleaming with labor-saving equipment — but on a wide, shady porch where the sun flickers through elms and maples, where the wind blows the warm scent of drying hay and clover through the rustling leaves.

The air is full of pleasant sounds: the rush and gurgle of the brook; crows in argument among the pines; the rhythmic clatter of the mowing machine. A woodpecker is swinging back his scarlet-marked head and tapping out a message in Morse code on the Dutchess apple tree. The hummingbird's wings whirr as his ruby throat quivers among the larkspur. With the thunder of wheels and of horses' feet another load of hay rumbles into the barn. Into this symphony comes the pleasantest sound of all: the stinging rattle of peas falling into a shining tin pan.

Peas so shelled, Mrs. Appleyard believes, are more than food. Eating them, even three helpings at a meal, is not gluttony, but a rite.

They are summer itself.

August

I. BROKEN GLASS

II. JERUSALEM

I

ANOTHER of the most musical sounds in the world, Mrs. Appleyard says, is the tinkling crash of a large window-pane as a baseball slams through it. Like some of the more emphatic moments in symphonic composition, it is particularly impressive because of the awed hush that follows it. After the hush, sounds break forth again. Youthful voices in mutual accusation mingle with older ones raised in reproach, or — worse still — with the veiled bitterness of anger controlled, a sound that always reminds Mrs. Appleyard of a pen that squeaks as it runs dry. There is the tinny rattle of the dustpan, too, the dry, prickly scratch of the broom, the dull click as the shattered fragments are collected, and the final clinking thud as they slither into the trash barrel.

In most families a period of gloom follows, but

there are children lucky enough to possess a parent — generally a mother, fathers as a rule having more sense — who scrapes old furniture. This is a mild form of insanity that makes its victim comparatively indifferent to wide open spaces in the living-room windows. Mrs. Appleyard, long a sufferer, has been known to survey the contents of the dustpan with a benign expression and remark: 'Well, it was about time.'

Now some women pin their faith on sandpaper and paint-remover; others sink fortunes in steel scrapers and steel wool. Still others feel on top of the bathroom cabinet and, if they find it empty, furtively snatch the blades from their husbands' razors. But the true technician — Mrs. Appleyard, for instance — wants glass, sturdy window-glass, smashed by a flying ball. No blow with a hammer, no work with a glass-cutter produces those sharp, smooth crescents without nicks or splinters, gently curved to fit the hand and to caress the tender surface of the wood without scratching it. Of course, it must be skilfully used. It is possible, even with the best tools, to botch any job. It is not generally known that glass has a right and a wrong side; that one edge will smooth the wood while the other only roughens it; that the flat surfaces of a table need convex curves, while concave pieces of glass can be used on chair rungs and spindles. A dull piece of glass — they

are all dull after five minutes, which is why children are allowed to own baseballs — may be used, Mrs. Appleyard tells us, for smoothing wood already scraped.

There is always an old sugar bucket full of discarded pieces before the polishing stage is reached. The work is soothingly slow, something like that of a geologist digging down through different stages to the primeval ooze.

Take that long table in the Corn Barn, for instance. The top is a single board thirty-six inches wide, cut from a pine that must have been marked for the King's Navy. Vermont became an independent republic soon enough so that King George lost some good masts. Old Remember Appleyard cut the big pine. It was sawed on an up-and-down saw. He may have made the table himself. Whoever made it was a good workman. The ends are neatly finished with mortised strips, with the grain of the wood running the right way. The legs and stretchers were made by someone who understood proportions and the use of a lathe, and the fact that a few turnings are better than too many. The table is long enough so that Remember and Rachel and their eight children sat around it. Those pewter plates with the London mark on them, the big platter with a piece cut out of the edge to melt for bullets, Rachel's shallow bowl with the hammer marks showing, Remember's

tankard that has lost its handle, must all have stood on it.

That was before it was painted with the paint left over from the barn. Mrs. Appleyard has been told that the paint was made out of Venetian red and skim milk. Hearsay is never good enough for her. Within a week she had mixed a batch herself and applied it to the outdoor dining table. Rain, peanut butter, raspberry shrub, sardines, sunshine, and the New England hurricane have left it as they found it. It sticks as closely as one Vermonter to another. In fact, it is the perfect Vermont paint — sturdy, loyal, as independent as a hog on ice, and stubborn about keeping its affairs to itself.

Of course, Mrs. Appleyard was not daunted by the Venetian red on Old Remember's table. The inconsistency of taking it off one table and applying it to another is one of those hobgoblins of little minds that do not trouble her.

'In friendship and in painting,' she says, 'save the surface and you save all. Only be sure the surface is worth saving.'

The boards out of which the outdoor table is made — they certainly never had any chance of getting into the King's Navy — are lucky, she thinks, to conceal their plebeian origin under honest barn paint.

There was a good deal to conceal on Remember's

table, too, Mrs. Appleyard admits. For a quarter of a century after 1790 it was prized and cherished, but the rest of the nineteenth century was hard on it. In the early years of the twentieth it was forgotten entirely until Standish and Hugh found it tucked under the eaves of the shed chamber. One of Rachel's plates, badly bent and tarnished, was on the floor underneath it.

Fortunately a window had recently been broken. Mrs. Appleyard began at once to unveil the sins of the nineteenth century. There were ink spots, the pricked trail of the tracing wheel, and deep scratches where a butcher's cleaver had hacked up a 'critter.' There were round black scars from the bottoms of hot saucepans. Tack holes and certain wisps of chenille indicated to the paleontological eye of Mrs. Appleyard that at some period of shabby gentility it had been edged with ball fringe. There were still pieces of cloth underneath that showed that later it had been demoted to being an ironing table. A lot can happen to a table in a hundred and fifty years.

Undoing it goes fast for the first three minutes, more slowly for the next three hours. Three months' patience and plenty of glass finish it. It ought to look pretty well now until about 1990.

Mrs. Appleyard wonders just how many tables she has redeemed from a hard life. They were not all so battered as this one. They were all different

and she learned something from them all. She knows the pink of mahogany dust, the shimmering old ivory of maple freshly smoothed, the warm brown of cherry wood cut from a tree that was full grown when G. Washington was making his first experiments in forestry. She knows how the broad, wavy grain of pine resents being scraped with the wrong edge of the glass and how curly maple feels like satinwood under the fingertips. No one knows better than she the joy of the supreme moment when the golden flood of linseed oil changes maple to clear and cloudy amber, turns walnut to polished tortoise-shell, or brings out the hidden flames in mahogany. Linseed oil thinned with turpentine, pumice, elbow grease — nothing else — and it is safe for another generation.

Every now and then someone says to Mrs. Appleyard, 'But don't you ever use shellac? It's so much quicker.'

These are fighting words, but this broken-glass tycoon is a woman of enormous self-control. All she does — her children are responsible for this phrase — is to slip one of her records into the machine. Besides her fascinating collection of family anecdotes, she has a unique assortment of addresses on such subjects as 'The Pasteurization of Milk,' 'How to Avoid Mountain Climbing,' 'The Electric Plant in Sickness and in Health (Illustrated),' 'Why Ride a Horse?' and 'Guests who Drop In: Their Cause and Cure' (two sides).

The record used in case of shellac is 'The Care and Feeding of Table Tops.' There is an impassioned introduction that inquires if you really want a table decorated with white rings from cocktail glasses, cloudy marks from vases of flowers, and a scar as a souvenir of every hot plate.

'Will you spend the rest of your life,' she demands, in moving tones, 'with coasters and cork mats and padded covers?'

Who dares to answer yes when Mrs. Appleyard's dark eyes begin to flash fire? She makes rubbing a table with boiled oil sound like chivalry to the oppressed. Her hearers think they are missing a crusade. Naturally they join it. They soon find themselves with oil in their fingernails and pumice on their rugs. Rags are at a premium. No husband who wears knitted underwear is safe. All the satisfaction he gets is the statement that there were runs in it anyway.

The hypnotized polishers work until their backs ache. In their ears echoes Mrs. Appleyard chanting 'Rub it ON! Rub it IN! Rub it OFF! Rub it UP! RUB WITH THE GRAIN!'

No girl can come to any harm who follows this advice.

II

IN AUGUST the Appleyards go to Jerusalem: that is, if they can find it. You must choose the right day. It should be so clear that every stone stands out on Catamountain. Couching Lion must be cut out of larkspur-blue paper and pasted against a sky that has clipper-ship clouds sailing across it. On a hazy day Jerusalem, that cup-shaped green valley in the hills, vanishes into the mist.

It should be easy enough to find it. You follow the curves of the River Road for a certain number of miles. You cross by the second covered bridge — or is it the third? Well, anyway, the one near where the watering trough used to be. Then take the third fork, and find the old sawmill. The dam is still there, if you look carefully, though the pond is gone. There is still a trickle of water, and maiden-hair grows out between the stones in a green waterfall. Another turn, a yellow house in a field where there are sheep feeding among the boulders. If the stones quiver in the haze so that you are not sure which are stones and which are sheep, go home: you will not find Jerusalem that day.

If the stones stand still and the sheep caper, keep on. There are only one or two more turns before

you reach the road. It is only on the wrong day that you do not see that it is really a road. On the right day it curves off into the woods so obviously that you cannot see why you missed it before. There is perhaps a mile of it before you reach the first gate. If your car has covered that mile of rocks and bog holes without losing any of its vital underparts,—you are a good driver and you had better not demonstrate your skill any further. Leave it in the next turnout. It is just as well to walk, anyway, because, while you are hugging the steering wheel, either actually in the front seat or mentally in the back one, you may miss the place where the hollow log used to be — the one where Jonathan hid.

Walking, you can still see that the shape of the log is still there, though now it is only a bed of ferns and moss and wood sorrel a little higher than the ground around it. Unless he was a short boy, Jonathan must have had to pull in his feet, Stan says.

Stan lies down on the bed of moss to prove this point. When he was fourteen, it fitted him perfectly. Now his five feet eleven extends out into the rocks beyond. The soldiers would certainly have seen Jonathan's feet, unless he pulled his knees up to his chin, if he was more than five feet seven.

‘What a whale of a pine it must have been when

it was standing to have a hollow big enough to scrooch your knees up in!' Hugh says, and they move up the last steep pitch to the second gate.

Mrs. Appleyard begins to sound like a horse with the heaves. The family and assorted guests give her a series of helpful pushes, someone unfastens the gate so that she will not have to climb it, and they are in Jerusalem.

The Appleyards never find it without some of the sense of discovery that the first settlers must have felt. It is so green, so quiet, in its ring of dark, protecting hills. The air that moves softly through it seems cleaner and fresher than other air — even than other Vermont air! The gentians in the wet edge of the woods are bluer than other gentians. The sky has broken and fallen. You think: I must run and tell someone about this. The sheep need a trip to the cleaners less than most sheep. They have more resemblance to the toyshop lamb and less to potato sacks on burnt matches than the sheep of ordinary fields. You begin to see why sheep have nibbled their way into so much poetry. Even the suspicious bleat that comes from a clump of wild roses has something musical about it. You half-expect to hear a flute blown softly. Only the whispering of the white birches, the voice of pines, remembering that pines once stood by the sea, stops you from hearing it.

'Only it wouldn't be flutes,' Mrs. Appleyard

says. 'Fiddles, perhaps. In the schoolhouse. It was over there. There were fifty children in the village school, you know, before the war.'

'In 1914?' asks the visitor, looking around at the empty valley.

'In 1860,' Mrs. Appleyard tells him; and he says, 'Oh, that war,' and adds, 'Go on — you promised to tell me when we got here.'

They all sit down on the closely nibbled turf in the shade of a twisted old apple tree. There is a spring that chuckles to itself a little way down the road. Weather and rain have worked on the road for eighty years, but you can still see where it ran.

For more than a hundred years people lived in Jerusalem. There are two men who fought in the Revolution buried under the old apple trees. You cannot see the graves, but you can feel them with your feet, and, when you have found them, see that the chunks of rough stone at the head and feet of the sunken oblongs were not always there. When men first came to the lonely valley, it was partly because it was a safe refuge from Indians, partly because even then it was a natural meadow where grass grew — a meadow that caught sunshine and held it, where the hills shut out the worst of the north wind. The soil was rocky, but it was fertile between the rocks and there were springs everywhere.

No one ever had a plough in Jerusalem. The

women used hoes and scratched out places for vegetable gardens on the slopes back of their cabins. It was a pretty sight in the fall, people say, when the corn was tasselled out and the pumpkins were beginning to be bright on the ground and the maples were turning brighter than the pumpkins. The men went hunting. There was plenty of game back in the hills. They cut some of the biggest pines for timber, and when the March days were sunny and the nights freezing, they tapped the maples and boiled down the sap. They did not leave Jerusalem often. Their clothes came mostly from the wool of their own sheep. They grew the greater part of their own food. Sometimes a load of lumber went to the world outside and calico and boots and perhaps a long rifle came back, but for the most part the world and Jerusalem troubled each other very little.

It was on one of those autumn days, when the maples were burning on the hillsides, that the war came to Jerusalem. Suddenly there were horses galloping up the road. No one had horses in the valley. Oxen hauled their timber to market. The strange sound brought the whole village to the doors of the log cabins.

The soldiers — eight of them — stopped in front of the schoolhouse. To the children, many of whom had never been out of the valley, the horses, with their heaving sides, with mud on their flanks and foam on their bridles, must have been strange

and exciting. Horses had been only pictures before. There was nothing in the pictures about the queer, hot, leathery, sweaty smell, or the creaking and the jingling and the thud of iron-shod feet.

The men who rode the horses were almost as strange as their mounts. Their fine blue coats with the sun winking on the buttons, their neatly shaven chins, their stiffly visored caps with the gold braid, were all something out of another world. In Jerusalem men melted into the landscape. Homespun was the color of tree-trunks. Whiskers and beards grew as the wind blows — where they listed. A partridge could hardly tell a man from a stump among dead ferns. If he had a hat at all, it was of fur or straw and, like the rest of him, was brought by sun and rain to the color of hay that has been left out all winter. The stiff visors of the soldiers' caps threw sharp shadows across their faces and made their eyes mysterious. One of them had a bugle. With the sun on it, it looked like pure gold. When the bugler sounded it, the notes echoed from Little Wildcat to Owl's Head and back again. It brought everyone to the schoolhouse who was not there already. Almost before the last echoes died away, Jerusalem, though the women standing around the schoolhouse did not know it, was blown away.

That young recruiting officer knew his work. Every man in the valley who was fit to go enlisted.

Some of the women cried as the men marched off, but most of them were quiet, partly because they were brave, partly because silence was their way of meeting most things; but mostly, perhaps, because they could not yet know that with those shambling, shapeless, hairy men the life of the valley was pouring out of it.

It was never to flow back. Some of the men would be killed, others maimed. Others would like 'outside' once they had seen it. The plains of the West would take some. The sea would call others. The South, wounded but unconquered, would take others and in its own good time make Southerners out of them. Jerusalem was finished.

Some of the women stayed through that first winter, managing somehow with the help of the boys and the old men to take care of the sheep and to feed their families. The second winter saw tallow candles still burning in a few cabin windows, but one by one the women gave up and went 'outside.' For a while they came back in the summer-time. Then slowly the little cabins began to leak and rot and heave with the frost. One by one they fell into the cellar holes that are still irregular dimples in the nibbled green turf of Jerusalem.

At last there was only Aunt Debby left. She never said what she thought of the women who gave up the struggle and left their town to fall to pieces, but her tongue was sharp enough with any

well-meaning person who tried to get her to leave.

Why should she go 'outside'? She had seen it and had a poor opinion of it which she expressed in crisp chirps. She was a small, brown, bright-eyed woman like a very old, wise chipping sparrow. She needed about as much as a sparrow to keep alive. She did so until she was a hundred years old or more.

That is her spring there under the apple tree. Her cabin was across the road. Those twisted lilacs, that clump of spirea, those stunted rose-bushes, mark her cellar hole. Those two tiger lilies were on either side of her front door.

It was the herbs — yarbs she called them — that kept Aunt Debby alive so long, people in the village said. Armed with bottles, they used to tramp the three miles to the valley and get the yarb tea that she brewed. There were several kinds, good for various afflictions. One, if drunk in the dark of the moon, was a love philtre. A piece of calico or a pound of sugar would purchase half a pint: probably good value in most cases. Some claim that there were spells, procurable for tobacco, that made the brew even more potent. Unfortunately, they have been forgotten. The water from her spring is still good for keeping rheumatism away, though. Old women in the village still send their grandchildren for it as their grandmothers used to send them when they were

children, in the days when they would find Aunt Debby sitting in her cabin door between the tiger lilies, smoking her pipe.

They say in the village that she still sits there on summer evenings. Not every evening and not for all eyes. An evening when the mist rises and the fire-flies flash in the grass under the apple trees is best, but even in broad daylight small girls make a curious gesture as they pass the door that is no longer there between the tiger lilies. Village children no longer curtsy to their elders, but there is a suggestion of a curtsy in this curious duck and bob that they make toward the cellar hole.

Bowing to Aunt Debby, they call it . . .

She was sitting at her door smoking her pipe as the men went past on their way to the war. Jonathan Evans was with them, though he was only eighteen and small for his age. He was carrying the bundle of clothes that she had packed for him. There was a white shirt in it that had been his father's. Jonathan was an orphan. He lived with Aunt Debby, who was his great-aunt. She gave a wave of the pipe as he passed that made him know that she understood that he had to save the Union and free the slaves. They understood each other without speech. The wave of the pipe said that she'd hoe the garden and manage the sheep.

In his eighteen years Jonathan had never been out of Jerusalem except to go to the sawmill at

the crossroads. He had always wanted to see 'outside,' and now was his chance. 'Outside,' however, proved disappointing. There was an emptiness about it. It had none of the sheltered cosiness of Jerusalem and none of the glitter and elegance that he had expected. Jonathan's notions of the world were based on a stray Currier and Ives print or two, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a tattered copy of *Godey's Ladies' Book*, and accounts by returned travellers who had been as far south as Montpelier or even Boston. His ideas included plush chairs, crimson curtains, marble-topped tables, striped candy, ladies in purple silk dresses big enough for a sheep to hide under, elegant gentlemen cracking whips over slaves, carpets with flowers on them, peacocks, and pink ice cream.

None of these things was anywhere to be seen.

The landscape had the same frost-nipped maples, the same clumps of fern turned orange and brown, hills not very different from his own hills, but arranged wrong. Perhaps the Winooski was the worst disappointment. They had to cross the river, the men said. To Jonathan a river meant the Mississippi, grand and vast, so wide that the opposite shore with its strange trees and runaway slaves faded into the mist. Great boats would float on it with black smoke in a plume behind them and music in the cabin and gamblers with grand waistcoats and diamond studs. Fur-trappers would go

down on flatboats, singing. There would be buffalo and Indians and crocodiles and pink birds as tall as a young heifer . . .

The Winooski was too large for a brook. You couldn't wade across it, but had to go tramping through the dust to find a bridge. Considered as a brook it was an annoyance. As a river it was a complete failure. Not a flamingo in sight — not even a crocodile. Besides, his feet hurt him. He stopped to take off his boots. He had not worn them since the winter and they pinched his toes cruelly. He was just uncurling them when the voice of the sergeant cut into his moment of comfort.

What ugly voices they had 'outside' . . .

He jammed his feet back into the boots and plodded on through the dust that the horses' feet raised. There was no dust in Jerusalem. It made tears run out of his eyes. It burned the inside of his nose and gritted between his teeth. He coughed and panted and sneezed and limped for fifteen miles.

Just when he decided to go back he probably could not have told. Perhaps it was when the sergeant shouted at him for lagging behind in Montpelier to gaze open-mouthed into a shop window. There was a lady in it as beautiful as any of the pictures in *Godey's*. She had braids of hair the color of a young chick and she was wearing a

scarlet shawl with a border that had every color you could think of in it. She was looking just over his head with enormous blue eyes and holding out her hand with a pink rose in it. There was another rose in her hair and her dress was sky-blue. He was still waiting to see if she would move when the sergeant bellowed at him.

‘You’re not a wax figure,’ was what he said, ‘though you’d make a good one.’

This remark was wasted on Jonathan as wit, but it succeeded in making him feel if anything more unhappy than ever. Perhaps the final decision came when he learned that army fare did not include ice cream — that mysterious delicacy. At any rate, when the volunteers were ready to take the train at the Junction the next morning, Jonathan was missing.

Two of the troopers were sent after him.

‘He’s gone home, of course,’ the lieutenant said. ‘Where else would he go? You’ll soon pick him up.’

There was another troop train leaving that afternoon. They could travel by that, he said, and the troopers galloped off into the dust, not without exchanging a few remarks about homesick louts who deserted.

In his bare feet Jonathan had travelled fast. He followed the road at night, but when dawn came, he went ‘cross-lots, wading brooks and

splashing through swamps. Once he missed his way, but he had gone through the first gate and was plodding wearily up to Jerusalem when he heard horses behind him. A moment before he had been dragging his feet, wondering if he could take another step; now he ran, but though the trees began to move faster, the hoofbeats grew louder. They had to stop at the gate. He could hear the troopers cursing. The few moments while the gate was being opened were the ones he needed. He reached the hollow log just in time, shoved his boots and his bundle into it, crawled in himself, and lay there panting.

He heard the horses come scrabbling up the rocky slope, then their feet go squelch, squelch, in the soft spot, and the squeak of leather and a hoof ringing suddenly on a stone.

He heard the trooper say: 'Come up, you brute. I'll teach you to shy at your shadow,' and the horses panting as they galloped through the mud. Then there was the pause at the upper gate and soon there was the sound of hoofs going *thud thock, thud thock*, on the firm turf.

Jonathan did not move after they were gone. He even slept a little while they were in the valley hunting for him. They gave it up after an hour or so. Aunt Debby was so evidently and honestly surprised by their visit, answered their questions with such frankness, fed them so generously on

plain doughnuts and maple syrup and a partridge that she had shot herself, that they soon ceased to mistrust her. She prescribed some yarb tea for the discomfort that the fat trooper experienced after meals, and would not take a penny for it.

They asked at the other cabins, but no one had seen Jonathan. They got very muddy tramping through a swamp to get to a cave on Little Wildcat. It was the thin trooper's idea that there might be a cave and all the boys in the village were delighted to show it to the soldiers. The fat trooper was tired of this idea long before they reached the cave which was not much more than one rock leaning against another and as empty as a broken whiskey bottle.

This was what the fat trooper puffed out and he added that these folks had certainly not seen the boy and that he was of the opinion that the army was well rid of him.

'He's probably hiding in these woods somewhere, but we might as well hunt for a chipmunk in a stone wall. Wherever we'd be, he'd be somewhere else,' the thin one said.

The fat one agreed, and added that the thing to do was to ride back to Montpelier and have dinner at the Pavilion. They must not miss that train, he said conscientiously, and if the boy had stopped for the night somewhere, as he probably had, they'd meet him on the road, wouldn't they?

So they set off. Jonathan, still in the soft coolness of the log, heard the horses go past him down the hill. He lay there for a long time listening to make sure that they had really gone. At last he started to crawl out, but a noise in the woods set his heart beating hard. Could one of them be sneaking back to catch him? Then he heard a hen partridge talking to her chicks. The noise was only the covey among the leaves.

At last he was out, the blood singing in his ears, his eyes dazzled by the sun spattering through the maples, his knees stiff, pins and needles prickling in his feet.

Aunt Debby showed no surprise when his shadow cut off the sunlight from her door.

'Thought you might be back, Jonathan,' was all she said. 'I've got water hot. Guess you might like to wash your feet.'

He soaked them in the hot suds, ate the food she brought him.

'It's big, outside,' he said once; and later: 'There was a shawl in a store window in the city. Red. Awful bright — and a lot of other colors in the edge of it. Like the leaves when they turn. You ought to have a shawl for winter.'

'There's plenty of fine things outside,' Aunt Debby said, in a tone of strict neutrality, 'and there are those that like it there.'

Jonathan went on pouring maple syrup into the

holes of a doughnut. He got up after a while and walked out into the valley. He looked at the cabins with the traces of seed corn hanging beside the doors, at the gardens on the hillside with the corn in shocks and the pumpkins shining in the sunlight, at the place on Owl's Head where he shot the bear, at the children playing around the schoolhouse. He listened to the gurgle of the spring and to the crows in the pines, to women turning spinning wheels and singing, to the sheep running on the turf, to the school-bell calling the children in from their game. He took long breaths of air that smelled faintly of balsam and wood smoke and wet leaves.

He walked to the graveyard under the apple trees and leaned on the fence, looking down at the gray stones among the ground pine and myrtle. There was an apple at the top of the tree that the pickers had left.

'No, not left,' Jonathan thought. 'They couldn't reach it.'

A gust of soft wind shook the tree and the apple fell at his feet. He picked it up and bit into its red cheek. No apples are so tart and sweet and juicy all at once as apples in Jerusalem.

With the taste of the apple still in his mouth and the picture of Jerusalem clear now in his mind beside the picture of the world outside it, he walked back to the cabin.

His aunt was sitting on the doorstep smoking.

His bundle of clothes, his boots with the laces knotted together, the tin dinner pail that he used to carry to school, were beside her on the doorstep. He hung the boots around his neck, picked up the bundle and the pail, and stood for a moment looking down at his aunt's small brown figure.

At last he said 'Good-bye, Aunt Debby,' and she nodded the way she did when she was pleased and said, 'Good-bye, Jonathan.'

Then he went back and fought all through the war.

'I see,' says the visitor, eating raspberries from the tangle of bushes that are growing up among Aunt Debby's lilacs — no raspberries distill sunshine into sweetness as raspberries do in Jerusalem — 'he had to test the strange things by the familiar ones.'

'He had to touch earth — his earth,' says someone else, 'you know, like that giant. We all have to, sometimes — to live.'

'Did he come back?' asks the visitor, carefully lifting up a tiger-lily blossom to look into its freckled face. (Evidently the right sort of visitor to bring to Jerusalem. Once there was one who picked them. Mrs. Appleyard doesn't know where she is now.)

'Not to stay,' Mrs. Appleyard says, 'but I think he must have come to see her because one of the

old women in the village — she used to come up here for water from the spring when she was a child — told me that she had often seen Aunt Debby sitting smoking and wearing her Paisley shawl. It was a Paisley with a scarlet centre, she said.'

September

I. EARLY FROST

II. DAYLIGHT WASTING

I

SUDDENLY it is the season for filling silos. Frost threatens on still nights and the first streamers of the Northern Lights sizzle across the sky. All through the north country corn is being cut, chopped, and stored in silos so that no worthy Jersey or Guernsey may be without her due portion of vitamins next winter. Outside the red barns — red because all barns should be red — there is a sound of champing, humming, and panting as the green corn is pushed into the maw of a complicated machine. It still glistens in its green paint so stylishly accented with crimson and gold. Only a pessimist, running his eye over certain excrescences in the fields and in the dump below the bridge, would spend any time wondering how long before it will go the way of all iron and

acquire that protective coating of rust that seems so necessary for all farm machinery.

However, at present it buzzes merrily along attracting children as a magnet does iron filings. Small boys ride on the carts that go back and forth to the fields. They snatch up bundles of green stalks and try to feed the machines. They are yanked away with warnings. The men around the machine ought to know what they are talking about: virtually none of them has a complete set of fingers. The bravest boys, the boldest girls, sneak off into the damp dimness of the silo itself, dare each other to jump from a height — afterward estimated at a hundred and fifty feet — and expose themselves recklessly to the rattling fusillade of the blower.

They emerge smeared with a sticky green fluid that seems to have a special affinity for pale blue shirts, although it is also pleasingly conspicuous on white ones. The wearers know some new words and practise them. (There are those who, on silo days, have gone to bed with the taste of ivory soap in their mouths.) They grab bunches of corn silk and decorate each other's heads with it. Shampoos — also maternal threats of sandpaper, pumice, and steel wool — are the order of the day as the spattered corn-silk-clad warriors come boasting home to supper.

Will there be corn for supper? Of course there

will. Was not that Mrs. Appleyard's ample form in the garden as they came down the road? It was, and she is putting into practice her theory that no corn is fit to eat if it has been picked longer than it takes to husk it before it goes into the kettle. Cover the kettle tightly with only a little water in the bottom; three minutes is long enough to cook it after it boils again. Then a clean damask napkin on a hot platter. Butter, plenty of butter.

'I've got the water on for the corn, children, so get washed as quick as crickets!'

Or perhaps it is the night of the corn roast. Mr. Appleyard has the fire going by the time the moon comes up. Through the trees it looks as coppery gold as the flames, but it is silver as it sails into the clear green-blue of the sky above Spruce Mountain. Sally thinks it is the size of a dime. Hugh, always optimistic, says a quarter. No one really cares. Corn is the thing.

Mr. Appleyard has the grate above the red coals covered with ears still in the husks and he keeps turning them tenderly with a forked stick. He has on that depraved-looking sweater that his wife has been trying to give away for ten years and a hat that no self-respecting scarecrow would wear in mudtime. His khaki trousers were new in the reign of Edward the Seventh. He looks perfectly happy.

Those too impatient for the subtler processes of corn roasting have sharpened sticks and are thrust-

ing husked ears into another fire. The ears are eaten half black and half raw. They would choke an ostrich, but at a corn roast, at nine o'clock at night, to young children, they are perfectly digestible, especially when topped off with hot dogs and those rolls that are stuffed with cotton — or is it Kapok? — well, anyway, from the bakery. There are also pickles and plenty of marshmallows for scorching. Mrs. Appleyard has provided these delicacies because she knows what is etiquette, but she herself waits until Mr. Appleyard says: 'I think this is a fairly good ear.'

She knows that means perfect, and it is. The sweetness is all in it. The kernels are full of milk. Outside they have just begun to turn a delicate brown. She dips it into a quart jar of soft butter. She sprinkles salt on it. She grasps it firmly with both hands. She bends over so it will drip on the grass and begins.

'That,' she says, wiping her hands on three paper napkins, 'is the way to eat corn. Why has no one put up a statue to a man who invented Golden Bantam?'

No one answers — their mouths are all too full to speak. After a buttery interval, Hugh brings the accordion and she thrusts her arms through the straps. She can play only the simplest tunes, but they are the ones people can sing. Firelight is like a bathtub — everyone can sing in it. Except Mrs.

Appleyard. She says her theme song is 'Saddest when I sing.'

'Everyone,' she explains, 'is saddest when I sing.'

She remembers, as she watches Hugh's tall figure moving from firelight into moonlight, how he sat on an upturned sap bucket and husked corn when he was three years old in this same pasture, with the lady elm casting its same wineglass shadow. That was the great moment of his life till then. She wonders where he and Stan and Tom will be next September and her fingers miss some notes. It is hard enough for her to hit the right ones, even when she puts her mind on it, so she goes on playing and stops thinking — much. Her thoughts are only the thoughts of ten million mothers. There will be plenty of time for them later — and this is the corn roast.

The fire begins to die down. At last Mrs. Appleyard's fingers are too cold to play any more. The singing goes on for a while, but the men begin to show the anti-social spirit that possesses males everywhere: they go into a huddle and talk politics. The women, seeing what a good time the men are having without them, remember how cross the children will be the next day and shake them out of their well-stuffed lethargy and into their party manners.

People begin to tell the Appleyards that it is too

bad they have to go back to the city just when the weather is getting pleasant.

'We'll have some of the best days of the year — warm and lovely — these next few weeks,' they say, not without a happy superiority.

Mrs. Appleyard vows to herself that some year she will stay all winter and make that remark to departing exiles. She will stay and see the maples turn pink and scarlet and gold and orange. She will see them in the swamps, crimson and flushed with purplish bloom. She will see her own house stand white and square with the rainbow hills behind it and know that inside it is warm and comfortable instead of bleak and dank behind shutters that seem to have turned blue with cold. She will see the birches put on gilt spangles and elms turn into arches of bronze.

It will all happen little by little and she will know its progress from day to day instead of coming back as an alien and hearing: 'Too bad you couldn't have come up last week-end before the leaves began to fall. We had a real hard rain that started them off. Now last Sunday they were just elegant.'

She resents the fact that just when she wants to be looking at the hills — for the change has begun already if you can drive to the right places to see it — she will be taking down curtains and hiding the pewter flagons from herself for next spring. To-

morrow she must begin the autumn ritual: Cover the spring. Wrap up the blankets. Put the back of a chair under the handle of the cellar-way door. Cover the Corn Barn chimney. Summon the plumbers to disconnect the water (just when there is lots of it). Put the porch furniture in the barn and the lawn furniture in the woodshed. (Why? — Well, we always do.) Break off the phlox seeds or it will all be magenta. Plant mouse seed for mice (sometimes she thinks she hatches a mouse for each seed). Get the money for the ginger-ale bottles . . . Everything done last spring is done in reverse. It is like that film of the children bathing that Hugh runs backwards. Their feet come out of the water and land on the raft . . .

It is all written down in a large book. She has even included in it a note to herself, saying: 'Don't forget to take your checkbook with you, Mrs. Appleyard, you dumb egg,' so this year perhaps she will not leave it open on the schoolmaster's desk. Perhaps she will not leave the cat shut up in the back buttery either and have to go back seventeen miles for him.

The house will be left alone. Word will go around in field-mice circles: '*Mrs. Appleyard's gone home. Come on in.*' The wind will try to get in, too. It will rattle the shutters and shake window-panes out of dry putty. Cobwebs will grow in the corners. Spiders will come out of the cracks and

happily welcome the flies that have crawled in from the cold. The rain will have all winter to find that crack under the Blue Room window that the carpenters can never discover. Snow will lie on the bulkhead and when it melts take the new paint off with it. On still nights, when it is forty below zero, the neighbors say you can hear the nails snap in the clapboards. Down into the ground burrows the frost, but it will come up again, and when it comes, heave the house with it. It will make a hump like the track of a giant mole in the library floor. It will hang in cold drops on the cellar beams till June.

Yet the house still stands after a hundred and ten winters, and some night she may be able, as she turns out her light, to count the children again — all under one roof, all asleep, all safe . . .

Mr. Appleyard is picking up corn husks and throwing them on the last embers. The men's sun-burned faces look Indian red in the glow. The women are shivering in their coats with the fur collars.

'Tell Mrs. Appleyard you hadda nice time, Horace. (Ihadda nicetimethankyouverymuch.) You folks don't any more'n come than you go back. Seems's though . . . I just hate to see the bluebirds start south. I know you'll be the next . . . Guess we'll have frost tonight. Summer's over — seems's if . . .'

'Yes,' says Mrs. Appleyard, 'summer's over.'

II

MRS. APPELYARD used to speak harshly about Daylight Saving. That was in the days when the children were assorted ages between eleven and two. She seemed to spend most of her time either in sitting on their heads in a vain attempt to induce premature sleep or in shaking them by the scruff of the neck to get them started for school in the morning.

After seven or eight years of this she realized — for she could always learn by experience — that children and chickens and cows have their own schedule and that you might just as well give up without a battle. Even after the children grew up, there were still things to keep you mentally active. All you had to do to enliven any conversation was to murmur, 'But what time does the train *really* start?' Besides, there was still the sport of trying to persuade Mr. Appleyard that no one would mistake him for a waiter if he appeared in a boiled shirt and those handsome black pearl studs in broad daylight. Life continued to be far from peaceful.

However, autumn did ultimately arrive and with it came that extra hour of sleep, the one she lost last spring. No hour was ever so luxurious as

that one. It made Mrs. Appleyard feel like Montaigne or Aldous Huxley or Haroun al Raschid or someone — anyway, the man who had his servant wake him an hour early for the pleasure of going back to sleep again.

Of course she did not really spend the hour in sleep. She dozed off occasionally, but she woke again and enjoyed the sunlight flickering on the ceiling — sunlight that was merely ornamental and that could be admired, not the kind that had to be hoarded for some distant emergency. She liked to listen to the sounds of a suburban morning: the dry rustle of dying elm leaves against the window-pane; the song sparrow on his way south still singing valiantly, though a little rustily; the enthusiastic bark of the neighbor's Scottie who had — for all she cared — chased her practically Persian cat up the trellis; the thump of the morning paper on the front steps; the hum of the waking city.

Just to make the most of not getting up, she crawled out of bed and looked at the garden. The last time she had made an early inspection of it was at five o'clock of a June morning. Then she had looked down on a pastel tangle of larkspur, Canterbury bells, and Madonna lilies with the exquisite forms of Silver Moon roses behind them. Now the most conspicuous thing on the trellis was the black cat Buccaroon. His fur was fluffed with

rage. He looked as big as a lynx. Below him the Scottie rushed and barked among the cheerful glow of marigolds and the mournful splendor of New England asters. A catbird balanced impertinently on the bird bath and made rude remarks at the imprisoned cat. Buccaroon pretended not to notice, but his jade-green eyes grew narrower and his tail twitched.

The Scottie kept making brave attempts to jump the necessary ten feet.

'This is a world of checks and balances,' Mrs. Appleyard thought, yawning, and went back to bed.

Her bed had never seemed so comfortable. Never were sheets so smooth, blankets so light. A whiff of gas informed her expert nose that Maggie had let the water under the oatmeal boil over again. There would be another forty minutes before the fragrance of coffee made her realize — deliciously — that she had overslept. One of the best things about getting back that extra hour was that it so often turned out to be an hour and a half. If all her investments had only turned out as well . . .

This was no topic on which to oversleep, and well she knew that this morning was her best chance. She had tried it on other days, but there were difficulties. Maggie's alarm clock would go off with a petulant sound. Mrs. Appleyard some-

times suspected Maggie of opening doors strategically so that the house in general shared the voice of that discourager of hesitancy.

Then Mr. Appleyard — the angel — would always take special pains not to make any noise. It is then that the razor falls in the bathtub. There is the stifled groan as the cheek is cut, the cheerful song suddenly muffled, the stumble on the stairs over the cord of the dressing gown, the steps on tiptoe with flapping slippers.

He always tried to keep the children quiet, too. It generally resulted in their breathing hard at the keyhole. That would be the morning the expressman came with the potatoes from the farm. He always wanted \$5.87. He would take a check. He didn't mind waiting while Mrs. Appleyard got up and wrote it. He didn't mind discussing the weather with the postman either in a loud, cheery tone for a while after the check had been given to him.

Mrs. Appleyard could always tell just where the postman was by the dogs in the neighborhood. Each dog barked conscientiously while the gray-blue figure was on his property. As the Appleyards had only a cat, the Scottie next door attended to their place as well as to his own. Just out of public spirit, he also took care of the laundryman.

The telephone was invariably active on these mornings. Philanthropists took a flattering interest

in Mrs. Appleyard's wardrobe. There were ladies who sold their 'Special Little Models' to some of the very best names in the *Social Register* and they were willing to let Mrs. Appleyard have some too. Others would 'refresh' two of her dresses for seventy-nine cents. It was their special service. There was a personal loan service that would take all the worry of her bills off her mind. The young lady with the voice like honey and almond cream seemed shocked when Mrs. Appleyard said she was not worrying about them. She seemed to feel sure that Mrs. Appleyard was coming to a bad end. She hoped that Mrs. Appleyard would remember their service in case of a rainy day. Mrs. Appleyard said that when she needed money she would certainly remember their name and that she would go to the pawnshop as usual. In the horrified hush that followed, she gently replaced the receiver.

It is on such a morning as this that photographers suddenly recall Mrs. Appleyard's classic beauty and that of her interesting offspring too. For a good many years she used to answer: 'I'm sorry — the children haven't a front tooth in their heads.' Now she says: 'I've got to lose thirty-five pounds before I have my picture taken.' Photographers have not yet found an answer to either of those remarks. Mrs. Appleyard considers them her special service to society.

Mrs. Appleyard brooded on these things for a

while the morning Daylight Saving ended. After a certain amount of this she got out of bed, announcing, 'I meant to sleep late this morning, but it doesn't seem to be any good.'

From the other bed Mr. Appleyard asked, 'What are you in such a hurry for? Daylight Saving's over.'

'It's eight o'clock,' Mrs. Appleyard said. 'I can smell coffee.'

'I forgot to set the clock back,' Mr. Appleyard said, 'and Maggie must have too. Go back to bed. You've got another hour.'

'You mean you forgot to set it forward, don't you?' Mrs. Appleyard said. 'I'm an hour late.'

Mr. Appleyard said patiently: 'I've told you for twenty years that you spring forward in the spring and fall back in the fall.'

Over the rest of this conversation the Appleyards think it is better to draw veils, Venetian blinds, velvet portières, or whatever you have handy.

They will take up the subject again next spring

October

I. PRINCELY FARE

II. THE CHOREMAN

I

ONE OF THE SILVERY LININGS of a somewhat cloudy period is that few foreign lecturers spend much time in telling Americans how this large tract of backwoods grates upon the nerves of artists, gourmets, and lovers. However, there are still a few visitors who earn their living by patronizing their patrons, and one of them has insulted Mrs. Appleyard. It was, to be sure, rather a long-range insult. The Prince was on a platform in a jungle of palms, chrysanthemums, and orchids. There are always orchids in the jungle according to the best authors. Only in South America they grow on trees and in North America they grow on clubwomen. Of course, sometimes it is gardenias — if that makes things any better.

Mrs. Appleyard was not one of the fauna and

flora on the platform. She was in one of the front seats. The back seats had all been taken by the early arrivals, so Mrs. Appleyard was shoved into the front row along with the two ladies who are always in the front row at lectures. They come with the hall and the potted palms and the gilt chairs. If they stay awake, the speaker knows he is doing all right.

The Prince came from one of those countries where 'Prince' is the equivalent of 'Mister.' He had a vibrant voice that kept the front row on the edge of their chairs. It is not good for a chair to have Mrs. Appleyard sit on the edge of it, or tip back in it for that matter. Therefore, she sat as quietly as Monadnock or any other worn-down mountain in hers. She can sit still and be pretty mad at the same time. She would not have gone to the lecture if she had known the Prince was going to talk about culture. She thought his topic was food and she had brought a large notebook that Cicely had in college and a pencil that Sally had overlooked.

The Prince, however, discussed food only on a high plane. He said the American attitude toward it was uncivilized. Americans thought too much about cleanliness, he said, and not enough about flavor. America needs more bacteria and fewer green porcelain sinks and stoves to match. He said some very bitter things about sliced bread,

too. He said the only American contributions to the art of dining were sliced bread and paper napkins, and that they could not be told apart. He also said American meat and American women were alike: they both needed ripening. Up to this point Mrs. Appleyard had felt rather sympathetic with the speaker. She herself, in her own quiet way, has fought against sliced bread. She knows that all men regard paper napkins as a personal affront. It was when the Prince said the American woman's idea of heaven was a delicatessen store that Mrs. Appleyard began to see red.

However, she looked at the young man rather in scorn than in anger. Probably, she thought, he has never eaten steamed Duxbury clams dripping with melted butter. He's missed soft-shell crabs in Baltimore, planked shad in Philadelphia, Penobscot salmon with juicy green peas on a New England Fourth of July. The unlucky creature had never, she felt sure, eaten roast chicken with mountain cranberry sauce — not the big Cape Cod cranberries, good though they are, but the tiny crimson berries from vines that trail along the edges of cliffs on Frenchman's Bay and on the top of Moosilauke in New Hampshire.

Did he know the things a Maine cook can do with a quart of blueberries? — the wonderful brown-crustied pies with the wine-colored juice leaking through gashes in the top, the steamed

blueberry pudding with the sauce that has half a pound of butter in it, those succulent muffins?

Did he ever arrive at a Vermont farmhouse just at sugaring time to be treated to plain doughnuts and maple syrup, pouring the amber liquid into the porous feather-weight twist of dough that is crisp and soft at once and getting it into the mouth before it leaks — a bit of difficult gastronomic technique? How about sugar on snow, lacy and golden and crisp and cold? And the pickles you always eat after it? Had he ever eaten salt pork fried crisp and served with sour-cream gravy and new potatoes dug that morning? Did he know the comfortable Saturday expectancy of yellow-eyed beans baked without skimping maple syrup and pork and of brown bread that is firm but not soggy, soft but not sticky, and hot enough to melt butter out of an electric refrigerator — that unyielding substance? Would he be indifferent to a lemon meringue pie with a two-inch fluff of meringue resting on a disk of transparent gold, at once sweet and sour?

How about corn that has been steamed in the same seaweed with clams, lobsters, and potatoes on a beach on Buzzard's Bay? And was he ever there the next day when someone made chowder out of the left-overs? Very likely, poor dunce, the only chowder he ever ate had tomato in it. What could he know, Mrs. Appleyard wondered — she

had long ago stopped listening to him — about the infinite ways of using corn meal North and South: spoon bread, hominy bread, hoeecake, scrapple, fried hasty pudding, Indian pudding, and, perhaps best of all, Rhode Island meal scalded and fried in crisp brown cakes that are soft inside. Why forget those? And why spurn American cookery while sweet potatoes still come out of ovens translucent with brown sugar and sprinkled with peanuts? While there is still ham in Virginia, Lady Baltimore cake in Charleston, and a single beaten biscuit in Maryland; while Gloucester still salts cod to be smothered in cream — not flour paste — and mashed into mealy baked potatoes; while fishballs are still brown and prickly of a Sunday morning on Beacon Hill? While cabrilla swims in the Gulf and tamales are hot and there is okra in chicken gumbo?

There is no need to call free-born Americans uncivilized while they can still order the glazed-brown surface of corned-beef hash decorated with the white and pink of a poached egg; while there are still happy regions where shortcakes are crimson with crushed wild strawberries, while Philadelphians still eat kidney stew and waffles for breakfast and terrapin for dinner.

‘A country the President of which feeds hot dogs to royalty can have no culture,’ the Prince was saying gloomily.

Mrs. Appleyard is just mean enough so that she took pleasure in noticing that most of the audience was giving the perfunctory cough of boredom and that the two ladies beside her were dozing. One of them was snoring too. 'In such food there is no mystery: without mystery is no civilized beauty. The only mystery is why with such food there are so many fat women.'

Mrs. Appleyard says the only mystery is why a lot of fat women will pay to be told they are. To vindicate the honor of American cookery and to satisfy the appetite she had worked up during the lecture, she called up Mr. Appleyard and got him to take her to Durgin-Park's for a broiled live lobster. That was better than broiling the Prince alive, she said.

On the way down town she bought a black dress with a long cross-over that does wonders for her. She feels ten pounds lighter in it. Mr. Appleyard has not seen the bill yet, but he expressed, with a certain nervousness, the wish that the next lecture at the Pinball and Scissors Club would be Beautiful Ubangi with colored slides. He thinks perhaps it would be an economy for him to hire the slides.

Just why he thinks Mrs. Appleyard would not get any ideas from it, no one knows.

II

AUTOMATIC HEATING PLANTS are fast making the old-fashioned choreman, that important cog in the domestic machinery, into a vanishing type. Plodding from house to house on his rounds, a little stooped, walking as if his feet hurt — as no doubt they did — his was a familiar figure. His overcoat, with turned-up collar, was of the hue of chocolates in a country store in summer, shading here and there to the purple of a too-ripe eggplant. Such a coat belonged to Jerry, who fed a hungry collection of furnaces for a generation on Overbrook Hill. Kindly memories hang around him in Mrs. Appleyard's mind.

His shrewd gray eyes twinkled kindly above a slightly red nose and a fringe of whiskers. He smelt of ashes, Day and Martin's shoe blacking, and tobacco. He was a stubby little man, but so sturdy, so endlessly patient, that he seemed a tower of strength. It was Jerry who brought a ladder and extracted the kitten from the elm, getting well scratched in the process. Jerry could always start a flopping kite or fasten a wheel to an ailing express cart. His pockets were mines of useful objects such as washers and cottar pins and string. Jerry could fix almost anything with string.

And did. It was Jerry who appeared when a strange dog had tugged off Hugh's new rubber boot and who pursued the thief across the snow with such weird expressions of wrath that Hugh forgot to cry as he stored the words for emergencies. When the Browns' house caught fire, Jerry carried out the baby, a bust of Clytie, and a crayon portrait of Mrs. Brown's mother that Mr. Brown had somehow overlooked.

Jerry tended furnaces, rolled out ash barrels, carried coal to the kitchen and wood to the parlor, split kindlings, cleaned boots, beat rugs, washed windows, put down and took up board walks, and manipulated screens. In summer, of course, he ceased to feed the furnaces, but instead set the lawn mower whirring, or stood with a skilful thumb pressed over the end of the hose, adjusting the stream of water as no patented nozzle could ever do.

Jerry was a practical communist. He believed that tools should be owned in common, and on Overbrook Hill he put his theories into practice. Mrs. Appleyard's father, Mr. Markham, for instance, owned — or thought he owned — a large wheelbarrow, but it was often more convenient for Jerry to keep it in the Browns' cellar. It was natural that it was forgotten at the time of the fire, Jerry being so busy saving the bust and the baby — and so forth. Mr. Markham never knew what became of the wheelbarrow. As far as he was con-

cerned it simply melted away, but he found himself the possessor of a new coal shovel, a stepladder, and an excellent jack screw. They seeped into the cellar from nowhere in particular.

It was nice having them, though after a while they vanished as silently as they had come. The lawn mower, that made hot afternoons on Overbrook Hill seem hotter, theoretically belonged to Mr. Tremaine, but it spent the night wherever Jerry was using it last. Saws and hatchets and bicycle pumps circulated swiftly about the Hill appearing where they were most needed. At one time there was an idea that the Overbrook Bird Banding Club had better give up studying the journeys of birds and take up the question of the migration of tools. There was one coarse-minded resident who actually suggested burning names on the handles of rakes and hoes. Nothing ever came of this crude idea. The man was a newcomer, anyway. There was a general feeling that they might do such things on the other side of Boston where the stranger had lived until five years ago, but not on Overbrook Hill. The neighborhood continued to enjoy a free flow of capital.

'I'll get a saw and cut off that limb before it breaks under the children, such climbing as they do, and hanging by the feet; it's seldom I go past but there's one of them upside down like a bat in a chimney; I wouldn't want to see their necks

broken on them,' Jerry would say; or: 'Sure I can fix the sink. I'll bring the wrench. No need to send for the plumber at all the way he'd be robbing you. I'll speak to that girl too. The girls that's in it these days thinks a sink's an ostrich and can eat whatever they feed it. If I'd find a golf ball in the trap now it would be no surprise.'

Jerry had his shortcomings: coal gas used to announce his arrival; the house, in harmony with nature, was hot on warm days and cold on cold ones. It was generally felt that in the garden he lacked the artist's touch. Magenta flowers bloomed profusely under his care and obstinately persisted in growing next to scarlet ones. Perhaps it was because he did not readily distinguish between weeds and seedlings. Yet he loved flowers, and it was pleasant to see him take a Van Vleet rose gently in his horny fingers and look at it with the same smile he had for the children.

He was gentle with flowers and children and puppies and birds that had fallen out of the nest, but he was scornful of vacuum cleaners and patent ash sifters. He liked to tell what he thought of them in his slow, husky voice. Any conversation with Jerry took a long time even if it was only about the weather. It was his great subject. Few meteorologists have ever experienced at first hand so much weather as Jerry and that old coat of his. It was an old coat, Mrs. Appleyard remembered, when she was young.

During all those years four o'clock in the morning was never too dark nor too cold for him to be out, setting furnaces rumbling, starting coal slithering down the pile. No rug lacked its quota of beating as the rhythmical *whup* of his sticks echoed through the crisp autumn air. No snow fell on the front porch unmet by Jerry's shovel. Rain and hail and sleet and thunder and hurricanes did not stay him on his appointed rounds. He only put his head down and walked a little faster.

He must have been eighty when he shook down his last furnace for the night. There was no need for him to work, his children said. He had plenty of money saved. The neighbors put in oil burners or gas furnaces. Which was better was a great topic on Overbrook Hill when the Euchre Club met.

Both inventions worked well. Perhaps it was because Jerry continued to inspect them: not in the early mornings. There must at least, Mrs. Appleyard liked to think, have been a few pitch-black mornings when Jerry between the hours of two and three, turned over and went to sleep again instead of starting out into whatever bracing combination of sleet and slush Stepmother Nature had provided. It was in the afternoons that the cellar door would be opened and there would be that slow, shuffling step, slower every day now, as Jerry made his rounds.

Mrs. Tremaine was indignant because she found him with the furnace door open gazing in at the flame of the oil burner and muttering to himself. It was uncanny, she said, and Mr. Tremaine must get the key back right away. There was still coal in the bin for the laundry stove. Suppose Jerry started shovelling it in — where would they all be then?

Jerry, Mr. Tremaine thought, would be in heaven. He didn't know about the rest of them. He added hastily that he would get the key.

This was easy to say. Execution proved difficult. Jerry agreed, with his old friendly smile, to return the key 'happen I'm up this way,' but it remained on the big bunch that made one of the knobby bulges in his old coat. There were keys of all shapes, sizes, vintages. Jerry alone knew which was which.

'Just ask him for the bunch and pick out ours,' Mrs. Tremaine said.

'In the first place, I don't know what it looks like. I lost the extra one five years ago. And Jerry has been keeping secrets about keys since before I was born. They're his badge of honor. Why should he give them up? He's not going to do any harm. Besides, what do you want me to do — knock him down and grab them?'

Similar dialogues took place in other Overbrook Hill houses and Jerry kept his keys. He never

shovelled coal into any of the new furnaces. Perhaps he did not require that particular form of exercise.

Mrs. Appleyard went down into her cellar one day to put something into the Morgan Memorial bag. The figure by the furnace startled her for a minute, but it was, of course, only Jerry. He had the door open and he was hunched over watching the flames. With the blue light from the gas flickering on his silvery whiskers and his stooped figure, he looked like a benevolent gnome. He was not muttering. The sound he was making was more like a contented hum or a purr: the kind of noise a small child makes when he is tired and happy and the day is over and he is alone and talks to an unseen friend.

Mrs. Appleyard could remember when to her Jerry was a tall man. She coughed a little without meaning to.

Jerry looked up and nodded to her kindly. 'Yon's a wonderful thing,' he said, with that same smile he had for a rose or a kitten. 'It's a grand draft it has to burn so steady.' He gave the whispering flames one last admiring look and shut the door. He fumbled in his pocket, took out a piece of wire and a nail and said, with an air partly reproving, partly pleased: 'There's a shutter loose on the dining-room window. Fastenin's gone. Banging it was. I'll just fix it for you — temporary.'

Mrs. Appleyard noticed the bent nail and the wire still there the other day. It was strange to think that it was the last small service that Jerry would ever do for her. She was glad that he'd kept his keys.

November

I. HIDDEN TREASURE

II. THANKSGIVING

I

SOMEHOW the first cold days, whenever they come, always catch Mrs. Appleyard unawares. In spite of past experiences, the ground always manages to harden up before she gets all the narcissus bulbs planted. She wakes in that chilly hour before dawn and remembers that the radiator of the car has not had its winter cocktail. Threatening flakes of snow fly through the air before she recalls that there are such things as overshoes. She has always been mildly resentful of the fact that just when she would really like to start hibernating, she has to indulge in the alert sport of hunting up the winter things.

Of course Mrs. Appleyard knows that there are people who file away the flotsam and jetsam left from last winter as carefully as if these interesting

prizes were to be collected in the Athenaeum. At least she has heard so. She has not, as a matter of fact, ever actually penetrated into one of these impeccable attics where the family property is stored in immaculate boxes of uniform size, classified, card-catalogued, shelf-listed, cross-indexed, and legibly labelled.

When any housekeeper tells about an attic like that, Mrs. Appleyard just takes it on faith. She simply pities anyone for such a monotonous arrangement; for after the first inertia is overcome and she realizes that there is no use thinking that she can spend the winter before the fire pretending she is reading *Pepys' Diary*, she finds no occupation more thrilling than raising the family property from its summer slumber.

Each bundle is a mystery in itself. Why did she think, on that hot and steaming morning last June, that she would recognize Stan's hockey pads simply by the feeling of the parcel and the fact that it was in a paper decorated with Orphan Annie's unchanging countenance? Mr. Appleyard, she knew, liked the *Transcript*, in those happy days when there was a *Transcript*, or the *Times* for his property, asserting that they wore better. That was why, a good many years ago, she thought that a certain flabby package must belong to him. It did in fact bear his initials in smeared red crayon. This was a thoughtful, if misleading,

provision. When a small scarlet zipper suit slid out, she realized that Sally and Samuel began with the same letter and regretfully relinquished the idea of dressing Mr. Appleyard up as a miniature Santa Claus.

A minor disappointment was the idea that the bundle tastefully gift-wrapped in an episode in the life of Terry and the Pirates might contain something for her own shivering form and the subsequent discovery that a particularly sun-backed bathing suit of Cicely's was all, absolutely all.

The dark closet under the stairs always used to yield a rich harvest: mittens in groups of three, a plaid muffler, not stolen, but something she had certainly never seen before — just a tribute to her personal magnetism probably. Then there was that splendid, indeed almost unique, collection of overshoes — no two of the same size, shape, or color. Would Henry Ford like them for his museum of transportation, Mrs. Appleyard wondered? Or would he prefer that particularly well-ventilated pair of rubber boots?

The dark closet was a kind of Appleyard calendar. You could always tell what time of year it was and how old the children were by taking soundings in it. Baseball gloves, tennis rackets, footballs, skates marked the changing seasons. The children who had once shoved rubber lambs

and fire engines into it had gone now, leaving ski poles and photographic enlargers behind them. Their names were on the labels under the four hooks on the door. Hugh's was barely legible. Mrs. Appleyard could remember the small beaver cap with the ear-lappets hanging there. And his first football helmet. And the Boy Scout hat. And the first gray hat like Mr. Appleyard's, worn to dancing school — under protest, of course.

The next hook was Cicely's. It used to have a brown velvet bonnet with a lace frill and mink fur hanging on it. Later a blue sailor's cap with H.M.S. Valiant on the ribbon. Then a scarlet *béret* from Paris. On her visit this year a wisp of gray fur and a velvet strap.

This was the hat Cicely left in the movies. She knew she must have dropped it beside her seat on the aisle. She has inherited this habit of dropping things in the movies from her dear mother. Mr. Appleyard has often had occasion to mention this trait. The usher went hunting for the hat with his flashlight, but he came back and announced in the pleased way that ushers have under these circumstances that there was no hat anywhere near any aisle seat. Cicely has also inherited a certain firmness of character — probably from her father. Mr. Appleyard is the man who single-handed made a certain restaurant restore the ancient custom of serving a piece of cheese with an *éclair*.

His letters make senators shake in their shoes. He is happiest when conducting a vendetta with a railroad or the telephone company. The remarks he has made about lisle socks make manufacturers toss sleeplessly upon their beds at dawn. . . .

Cicely went down the aisle herself the second time, the usher, complete with flashlight, attending.

'There it is,' she said, pointing six rows ahead.

'I saw that before,' announced the usher in a hoarse whisper that drowned the voices on the screen. 'It's only a piece of dust.'

He may have been right, but anyway Cicely wore it home.

Mrs. Appleyard likes to think over the different phases of life in the dark closet. Once she put a bag of bananas there to ripen for Mr. Appleyard, who feels strongly about bananas. He thinks they ought to be ripened on the decks of schooners. No banana, he says, ought to know there is such a thing as ice in the world. Not having a schooner, Mrs. Appleyard has had satisfactory results with the dark closet. Sometimes Mr. Appleyard has said that one of its products tasted almost like a Vermont banana. It seems they grew a very fine type of banana in this remarkable state when Mr. Appleyard was a boy. Unfortunately, in dealing with this particular batch Mrs. Appleyard let two weeks elapse. No bananas, even in Vermont, can ever have been riper.

Mr. Appleyard was very nice about it. All he said was: 'If we got a bunch of deck-ripes and hung them in the kitchen, you wouldn't forget them.'

'I will buy a schooner and moor it in the bird bath,' Mrs. Appleyard said.

There is not much in the closet now but electric light bulbs and cameras and flower vases, but there are other well-stuffed places in the house. There is the old cedar chest with its pungent-smelling blankets and sweaters. Is there a color in the world that the Appleyard children have not had in sweaters? Mrs. Appleyard, in looking over this rainbow before distributing it to people the right size, decided that the only color lacking was that of mustard pickles. She found a silver porringer wrapped up in an orange sweater that had once been Sally's. The linen closet yielded four silver candlesticks. Mr. Appleyard says it's the first place a burglar would look; she says they were successfully hidden from her, anyway. She thinks there may be something thrilling in the cellar, because there is no doubt that things move around in an uncanny way during the long, lonely summer days. It must be the heat or the humidity or something.

Anyway, she sees no point in looking for Captain Kidd's hoard. She recommends hunting for the winter clothes and having some real fun.

II

WHEN THANKSGIVING arrives, Mrs. Appleyard is always thankful. For a good many years this has made her seem mildly eccentric because for the most part the holiday has seemed to mean a good deal of indigestion and a small amount of thankfulness. The more people had, the less grateful they seemed. The Pilgrims were appreciative of a few squashes and pumpkins; grateful for the fact that their friends and families had not all died of plague and hunger, for their pleasant social relations with their red-skinned neighbors, for shelter—such as it was—from the ferocity of winter, for freedom to worship in their own way, and to make anyone who didn't very uncomfortable. For a good many years freedom, food, and shelter have been considered too much a matter of course to make much fuss over. It needed something really significant, such as an unexpected Picasso (what other kind is there?) or a new speedboat, to arouse much enthusiasm. Lately Mrs. Appleyard's attitude has become fashionable again. It is like the contents of her attic. No Appleyard ever throws anything away. It was in an Appleyard medicine chest that a bottle was found labelled: 'Calomel, I think.' They know that if you keep a thing long enough, it

comes back into fashion. What was junk to one generation is a priceless antique to the next but one.

Just now the Pilgrim heritage of thankfulness simply for warmth and food and friends and freedom is being taken out of a good many mental attics, dusted, polished, and found to be a good piece of furniture. Mrs. Appleyard, though, was thankful all the time. Not from any superior virtue or even foresight, but because she belonged to a class that was always grateful on Thanksgiving Day — the mothers of football players. By dinner-time that day, in those happy regions where winter comes to the rescue, the season is over. The form of mayhem called hockey has not started, so many boys still have their front teeth. Mothers who can sit down with their families intact are as thankful to Providence as any pioneer woman who could look around her table and see her family clothed, fed, and miraculously preserved from sickness and savages.

There is a good deal of Spartan spirit in the mothers of football heroes and just as much — more perhaps — in the mothers of those whose names and faces never occupy any space in the headlines. Probably there is not one woman who does not inwardly dread every play in which her son takes part; not one who sees a boy knocked out on the field without thinking, first, 'Is it Bill?' and

then — if it is some other woman's son — 'How can she stand it?' Yet from the day that her boy goes into his first game, a small lumpy figure, all shoulder pads, his head almost swallowed in a cavernous helmet, his legs like pipestems in enormous boots, she keeps a calm face. Her attitude is always 'with your shield or upon it.' It is all she can do for him.

Both the Appleyard boys had come through without much damage. There was that concussion of Hugh's, of course, and his shoulder. Stan emerged from his education with nothing worse than a collar bone that had been broken and very well mended. Stan always claimed that football was a quiet, safe game; the time he broke his leg he was playing ping-pong. Stan was too light to play football in college — a circumstance that gave his mother a warm glow of pleasure every time she thought of it. Hugh played. He was only a third-string end, but Mrs. Appleyard learned two plays — 'mother's skull practice' was a Sunday afternoon diversion — in which the right end was supposed to catch a pass. Generally he didn't because of what Mrs. Appleyard could only interpret as personal spite on the part of the other team.

The other men on the field — except the officials in those ridiculous white rompers — always looked a good deal alike, but Mr. and Mrs. Appleyard could always pick out Hugh. Mr. Appleyard

recognized Hugh once just by the back of his hand on another boy's shoulder. Mrs. Appleyard knew him by the way he moved and the way he held his head. Mud on the football field — like other dirt — always stuck to Hugh, and if there was a torn jersey on the field, it was his. When he sat on the bench, she could tell him by the way his hair stuck up and by his eager but relaxed look. He was never strung tight like Stan.

Mrs. Appleyard did not look at Hugh quite all the time when he was on the bench. Until he began to warm up with that long, springy stride of his, she could enjoy the game. She liked the singing and the antics of the cheer leaders and the large drum that made so little noise when they played 'Wintergreen for President.' She liked the funny hats that the débutantes wore. (It never occurred to her that, if a débutante looked at her at all, she would think Mrs. Appleyard's last year's model was a funny hat!) She liked the cheerful plaids of tweed jackets. She also enjoyed the wrinkled trench coats whichever side out they were and often wondered whether the occupants slept in them or whether there was a special beauty parlor in Harvard Square in which the coats were treated in a permanent wrinkling machine. She liked the small girls with bands on their teeth and pigtails sticking out under tartan caps. She liked their fathers looking benevolent in the coonskin coats

they had in college. She even — while Hugh was on the bench — enjoyed the play.

There is something savage in us all. The savage streak in Mrs. Appleyard took pleasure in the tense moment just before the whistle blew, in the strong, swiftly moving bodies, in the thud of feet, and in the hoarse roar of the crowd. The sound of the ball being kicked, the neatness of blocking and interference, the patterns of red and blue on the green and striped field all helped to make her one of the crowd. When they yelled, so did she. She did not mean to. She simply would discover to her surprise that her mouth was open and that her own voice was part of that great roar.

Mr. Appleyard, of course, always knew what the shouting was for. His wife knew sometimes. At others she forgot the game entirely and watched the crowd. The scarlet jackets and the blue coats, the bright mufflers and the brown fur and the gray hats, the feathers and flowers and the pinkish tan of thousands of faces would all fade, as the afternoon faded, into a sort of misty purple. Drifts of thin blue smoke would blow across it. Flares from cigarette lighters shone through it like lighthouses in a fog. No, not lighthouses. That was a steady flash. These lights danced and flickered like fireflies in a June mist.

The sun would go down in a clear sky behind the Stadium. They would all be in shadow, but

up above them a silver plane would still gleam in the sunlight. People would watch it without thinking much about it except that it was like a fish floating in blue water — a flying fish that had a crimson tail which obligingly advised the hungry that there was food at somebody's Hi-Hat restaurant. Perhaps the spelling may have aroused hostility in some hearts other than Mrs. Appleyard's, but after all quaintness in spelling, even in the air, is easier to forgive than some other air habits and inattention was the harshest measure adopted toward it. The sound of its motor would be loud for a moment; then the crowd would shout again and the noise of the plane would be lost. It would be only a faint drone in the distance when the cheering was over. Suddenly one of those eerie silences that are part of a big game would fall on the cheering crowd. It would last only a few seconds, but they would seem long and while they dragged on the shadows would grow deeper.

It was in one of those silences that Mrs. Appleyard remembers seeing Hugh drop his blanket and run across the field. She saw his number jiggle up and down as he ran. It was a short number — not the long one he has now. Only football players had numbers then and automobiles and telephones. Mrs. Appleyard never could remember the number of her car, but she has no difficulty with Hugh's draft number — 1893 — nor Stan's, 2407. She

woke the other morning sure that she had just seen them both in large white letters on crimson . . .

For her the game began with Hugh running on. The figures on the field became only one figure — that of a small boy who always used to smile through the worst earaches, who had a hard time learning to whistle and do geometry, who listened seriously to other people's troubles and never told his own, whose socks had such awful holes in them and . . .

Mr. Appleyard was thumping her on the shoulder.

'Did you see that? He caught a pass — Hugh caught a pass — Hugh caught a pass!!!'

She could hear his voice through the cheering. In spite of all that skull practice, Mrs. Appleyard had missed it. She did not dare admit it. Fortunately everyone else in the Stadium had seen it. They were still yelling, so she did not have to speak. She looked at the clock on the score board.

'He's still all right. Only three more minutes to play. Three more minutes . . . and next week's Thanksgiving.'

December

I. CARDS OF CHEER

II. SHOPPING LATE

I

MR. AND MRS. APPLEYARD belong to different schools of thought on the subject of Christmas cards. Mr. Appleyard likes to save them for one vast orgy of opening on Christmas Day. His wife likes to open them as they come, choosing the handsomest and the funniest to put on the living-room mantelpiece, leaving the others lying around in piles wherever she happened to be when she was opening them. Mr. Appleyard slits envelopes neatly along the top and writes changes of addresses in the book that records Mrs. Appleyard's twenty-year struggle not to forget anyone. The battle has not been simplified by her habit of tearing envelopes open impetuously and hurling them into the wastebasket without paying any attention to the back flap.

Mrs. Appleyard gave up her career to marry Mr. Appleyard. It was that of a librarian. She often wonders why the libraries have not put up a statue to Mr. Appleyard . . .

For dealing with the card situation, the following compromise has been worked out and without calling in the Supreme Court. Mr. Appleyard opens neatly all the cards that come to his office. It is he who looks over the list and says: 'The Nelsons sent us one. You still have time to get one in the mail.' It is Mrs. Appleyard who, moaning low, repairs the error. In order to conduct such book-keeping operations the cards obviously have to be opened before Christmas, so Mrs. Appleyard has her wild way with those that come to the house and Mr. Appleyard roots patiently among the various piles, seeing some cards eleven times and others not at all. Mrs. Appleyard, however, undertakes not to throw any away until she has collected them all in one box and given that box into Mr. Appleyard's hands with a sworn affidavit that *these are all*.

Mr. Appleyard was particularly touched, when the cards were finally shucked and harvested this year, to see how people, many of whom the Appleyards have never even met, remembered them. There were, for instance, the gentlemen who cleaned rugs. They had been only musical, mouth-filling names to the Appleyards. Mrs. Appleyard had always thought of them as living their strenu-

ous Armenian lives in an atmosphere of gasoline and camphor, sucking up dirt with enormous vacuum cleaners, playing hoses like fat pythons, swishing rugs up and down in vats of the purest and most ethereal soapsuds, peering through microscopes in search of moth eggs, trapping the moths themselves with smiles, sweet cream, and honey, weaving little palm leaves in spots used too frequently as ash trays by members of the best families so often mentioned in the rugmen's advertising. How often, on reading the reminder that it was time for her rugs to be cleaned, has Mrs. Appleyard's heart swelled with pride to think that her rugs would associate with the rugs of the most exclusive families; that they might even share the same soapsuds! She has always felt that it was very democratic of the rug people to give her ancient and weary floor coverings this social set forward.

And how more than kind and condescending it was of them to sit right down in all that bustle and send the Appleyards a card showing a blazing fireplace, stockings, Scottie dogs, candles, and not a rug in sight. (All at the cleaners' probably!)

It was genial of the lobsterman to remember them — and with that handsome picture of a camel! Mr. Appleyard said he had never seen lobsters transported by camels, but he would like to. Natural history is reticent on this point, but he

thinks perhaps camels may keep one compartment especially for lobsters. He also said, somewhat ungratefully, that with lobster prices what they are, he would have preferred a claw to a camel.

Mrs. Appleyard suggested, in a tone of false meekness, that the Appleyards had not sent the lobsterman any card and had she better, etc., etc. . . .? Mr. Appleyard did not show any enthusiasm. He seems to suspect a selfish motive in these greetings.

Mrs. Appleyard says that at Christmas-time he should stifle such unworthy sentiments. She feels sure that, when the garageman sent that spirited picture of a stage-coach, he had no recollection of having changed one very flat tire, supplying two quarts of Never-Ready No-Vap and a set of mud-hooks (of which Mrs. Appleyard has since lost three). She knows the butcher can't be uneasy about his bill because he sent not only a succulent turkey, but also a gaily illuminated bit of parchment hoping they were pleased with his services. The Appleyards take this opportunity to assure him that they are and also that they will be in the market for a tip of the sirloin, weighing about seven and a half pounds, cut from a nice heavy steer, just as soon as they get through the turkey-soup stage.

In the mist of this era of good feeling — when even the hardwareman saluted Mrs. Appleyard

with such a magnificently painted bunch of mistletoe that she feels shy about trying to exchange that splendid barometer for a sanitary garbage receiver — there is one crumpled rose leaf. Right in the heart of the Christmas mail, without so much as a sprig of holly on it, was a card from the library remarking in the tersest way that the books she borrowed in November were now liable to a fine of fifty-six cents.

In her first moment of irritation, she decided not to let them put up that statue of Mr. Appleyard, or even a bronze tablet. However, we have not written of this disturber of filing systems to any purpose if we have given the impression that she has much leisure for harboring grudges. After a brief spasm of planning to get even with them by becoming a librarian, after all, she put the card on the mantelpiece among the other gems of the season.

‘Ah, well,’ quoth Mrs. Appleyard, hunting for her pocketbook, ‘into each life some rain must fall.’ (Unquoth.)

II

MRS. APPLEYARD KNOWS perfectly well that she ought to shop early for Christmas. She knows that it is only common sense to buy presents early,

choose them according to their usefulness, wrap them up at her convenience, mail them shortly after July Fourth, and be sure of waking brisk and active on Christmas morning with a clear conscience and unruffled temper. Yet somehow unless she joins in the last-minute bustle and jostle, unless she buys at least one present that is fascinating, frivolous, and beyond her means, for her it just isn't Christmas.

A few years ago there was started a Society for the Suppression of Useless Giving. It did its work so well that it vanished, leaving — according to Mrs. Appleyard — a sensible but dull world behind it. She likes to think of the days when a young bride's first act on going to housekeeping was to gild three broom handles, cover the lid of a butter box with green velvet, edge it with yellow fringe, and thus create what the furniture trade now chastely calls an 'occasional table.' You could paint bulrushes on a mirror, too, or pond lilies. Strange and wonderful things could be done with milkweed. There were magazines that told you how, in case your natural ingenuity failed.

In those days presents had to be useless to be acceptable. Of course there was no objection to finding some use for them — if you could — but in the Bric-à-Brac Era a useful present implied that you couldn't buy the thing for yourself, and that was a deadly insult. Somehow it has ceased to be one.

The possibility of affronting her friends and relations was not Mrs. Appleyard's worry this year as she hurried past one red and silver and green window after another.

'Darling Clarabelle says dolls are babyish — I'll have to give the one I got for her to someone else . . . that comes of shopping early. Now, what shall I get for the br . . . the dear little thing? Perhaps she needs a cigarette case — she's seven . . . Horace? Horace wants neckties — he said so. But he says the ones he got last year were lousy. Christmas dogs he called them. It would serve him right if I bought him that one with the petunias on it . . . I wonder if Bertha Tremaine means to give me anything this year. She had a meaning look in her eye the third time she told me how much she was doing for the Greeks. Well, I can keep it — a folding card-table always comes in handy. I can lend it to the church . . .'

In spite of such ripples in her stream of consciousness, Mrs. Appleyard took time to be glad that she does not need to ruin her eyesight at midnight by embroidering pallid violets on a whisk-broom holder, or making a glove case by punching holes in linen and then filling them up again with spider webs.

She is glad that anything is acceptable — from lipsticks to lingerie, fur coats to frying pans, caviar to collar buttons. She likes to think of Serena

Brown, the president of the Overbrook Hill Garden Club, whose husband gave her a cord of manure for Christmas. Serena rejoiced in its fragrance, thinking of it later as transformed into lilies and roses. Practically Adam had said it with flowers. He apologized for not wrapping his present up in tissue paper and red ribbon, but Serena refused to see anything unromantic in it. Anyway, he had thoughtfully decorated it with a sprig of mistletoe.

He realized that a present without either an air of mystery or a touch of decoration lacks that dash of sentiment that, even in a practical age, we still demand. American enterprise has tied ribbon around refrigerators, wrapped tire chains in holly-papered boxes, swathed toothbrushes in gold cellophane, but for some reason no one has taken up the idea of fertilizer trimmed with mistletoe. It is a pity, for there is something substantial and sensible about such a gift. Mrs. Appleyard heard of one man who took his wife's car to the filling station Christmas morning and had some of the free air put in the tires. He is unmarried just at present. Mrs. Appleyard has his address — in case anyone wants it . . .

She plunged into a revolving door. They get going faster and faster at Christmas-time. Someone dove into it with her. Luckily the newcomer was thin. She and Mrs. Appleyard filled the compartment solid so they were able to slow the door

down, thus saving the life of a little old lady carrying a small pair of skis, and giving a lot of innocent pleasure to those who saw Mrs. Appleyard emerge on the other side. She makes a business of slowing down doors at Christmas-time. She is not a Girl Scout, but that is no reason for not acting as a brake for a revolving door if that is your talent.

‘Smug people with their presents all in cold storage miss half the fun,’ she thought as she adjusted her hat and waded into the scuffle.

The shop was a dazzle of light and color, pleasantly warm and stuffy after the raw chill outside. The air was full of exciting smells. She fought her way past the perfume counter burying her nose in her collar. Farther on, new blankets, new sheets, new bolts of silk all gave off their clean scent. The luggage section was so agreeably pungent that she paid twice as much as she had planned for Hugh’s new kit-bag. Near-by, in the fur department, salesmen trod silently across plush carpets through an atmosphere rich with moth flakes and refinement. Even on Christmas Eve fur salesmen do not forget their dignity. The most condescending of them all, a kind of bishop among furriers, condescended sufficiently to say that the coat she and Sally had looked at the other day was now reduced in price. It was nice of him to mention such a sordid subject, Mrs. Appleyard thought, for it evidently gave him pain, and she could see that he

hated to part with the coat. However, she bought it. She had meant to, the moment she had seen Sally's eyelashes flutter over it.

She had resisted the camera for Stan when she went up the escalator. It was a wonderful camera. It would do everything except paste the pictures in a book. She bought it as she came down. Stan would get it by New Year's, she explained to herself guiltily, and plunged down to a floor where the smells were especially stimulating. In the space of a few hundred feet Mrs. Appleyard's nose detected popcorn, warm fir balsam, *narcisse noire*, hot dogs with mustard relish, French-fried scallops, phonograph records, and salt-water taffy. Radios blatted cheerfully, drowning the sound of tired, shuffling feet and the murmur of weary voices. People talk to themselves a good deal on Christmas Eve and sometimes to Mrs. Appleyard. She learns interesting things about their home life and has acquired an impression, of course on insufficient evidence, that there is a lot of happiness and kindness blowing about the world that does not get into official statistics.

Still everyone is not in a happy mood.

'Where did I put it? Oh, where did I put it?' inquired a distracted lady whose gray hair hung in strings under her ancient velvet hat. She seemed to be addressing her remarks to an electric washer which went on whirling suds about with heartless

indifference. Another scanned a tattered slip of paper and murmured hopelessly, 'Chafing dish Aunt Abigail Howard socks size eleven or was that Chester Grace hates peach panties.'

A small mother lugged a baby almost as big as herself. He was sound asleep and his white boots dangled limply from his pink leggings. She kept right on talking to him. He was called Toots or sometimes Donald after his grandfather . . . Others were not asleep — far from it. The toy department echoed with their wails. Yells too. Also chuckles of pure joy. Who has seen Christmas whose ankles have not been endangered by a kiddy car shaped like an airplane? Who has not stood spellbound while the electric train clicks merrily out of the tunnel? Who has not had Mickey Mouse balloons exploded in her face? Not Mrs. Appleyard certainly.

She looked a little disapprovingly at the grandmothers. She could tell them by their expressions of foolish fondness for what seemed to be very average children. Mrs. Appleyard's grandchildren — if they had existed — would have been infinitely superior and at home in bed.

Aside from this she approved of everything. She liked the woman, rigid-looking when seen from behind, who turned out to have a smile on her face, a wreath of pine and red berries over her arm, a weary paper bag with a large toy lamb breaking

through it under the other, and a spare hand to give to a tear-stained urchin who had lost his mother. The gap between him and his mother was not large and it was quickly bridged. The small boy received a good shaking and felt better at once . . . There was a big man with a walrus moustache who stood helplessly at the stocking counter trying to decide between sunset glow and rose beige. Mrs. Appleyard was swept past him without finding which he chose. She had taken a great liking to him. She even liked the pushing.

Christmas pushing is good-natured. People who would scowl at having their elbows joggled on other days submit to having their feet stepped on with urbanity. Mrs. Appleyard saw a pink-faced old gentleman's square-topped hat knocked off by a refractory pair of ski poles. His arms were full of many-angled packages, but he put them all down, picked up his hat, and, turning to the owner of the ski-poles, who was also carrying a bird-cage, a lamp-shade, and a small tin pail that Mrs. Appleyard instantly diagnosed as goldfish, smiled and wished him a Merry Christmas. So don't blame her for believing in miracles . . .

She had a private one of her own. All the children but Stan had come home for Christmas. He was too far away. The others were waiting for her now with the car on Park Street. She hurried toward it because she was later than she had said.

The big box with the coat in it and the clumsy bundle that was the kit-bag took some manoeuvring through the crowd. She managed them both, however, and did not even drop any of the smaller packages, not even the waistcoat buttons for Mr. Appleyard; but when she arrived, panting slightly and with her hat over one eye, there was no car there — at least, no dusty car that might be either green or gray according to whether you were an optimist or not. The street was filled solid with cars that had been polished for Christmas. It was a handsome sight, and the State House looked very well, too, with its Christmas lights, but Mrs. Appleyard's feet hurt too much by this time for her to be really appreciative of the sights of her fair city. Even the lighted Christmas Tree on the Common began to look tawdry instead of gay.

'I thought beauty was in the eye of the beholder, but I believe it's really in the feet,' Mrs. Appleyard murmured to herself.

Just then she saw the car. It came round the corner of Tremont Street just as the light changed, with a fine free swing that made Mrs. Appleyard think, 'Cicely's driving!'

So she was. All roads are alike to Cicely. Tom was still clutching the door handle as they whizzed up to the curb. Mrs. Appleyard threw him a glance of sympathy. She assumed that it would be welcome. Cicely, like her father, was a very skilful driver.

Tom got out, saying, 'Sit in front, I'll get in back. I'll put the packages in the trunk — it's not quite full yet.'

Somehow the car was fuller than it should have been — not with bundles. Mr. Appleyard and Hugh and Sally were sitting on the back seat with packages around their feet, mysterious last-minute packages — but that was hardly enough to account for the fact that they all looked like cats who had just eaten a cageful of canaries with perhaps a few love birds thrown in. Sally's face, the most impish of the lot, had no business to be so high up in the air. She was sitting on someone and that someone was — here Mrs. Appleyard began to hunt for her handkerchief — yes, it was Stan's face that emerged from behind Sally: Stan, who was supposed to be in Texas painting a mural in a post office. Mrs. Appleyard had spoken crossly about the Government only that morning and about Texas. At this moment everyone from the President down suddenly seemed worthy of a halo. And Texas — what a wonderful state it must be that had sent Stan, brown, red-cheeked, with his sunburned hair falling down over his forehead, his blue eyes crinkled in the smile that was only Stan's — home for Christmas.

'Take mine,' said Mr. Appleyard, 'it's clean.'

'What,' thought Mrs. Appleyard happily, 'does a woman do whose husband doesn't carry a clean

handkerchief for emergencies? How wonderful men are! Kleenex is absolutely no good at a time like this.'

'It was a miracle,' Stan was saying. 'I had just twenty minutes to catch the plane . . .'

Yes, it was a miracle. Mrs. Appleyard is sure of that.

THE END

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